BANDWAGON

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2001



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THE FRONT COVER

Sun Bros. Circus toured from 1892 to 1918. It went on rails at the end of the century and was never larger than nine cars. It played the South and Midwest. This poster was printed by Erie Litho and was used for many years. Circus World Museum collection.

MORE CONTRIBUTIONS

Circus Historical Society members made even more special cash contributions during the year 2000. In addition to those reported in the last issue, there was a major gift of $2,000 (the largest of all), another of $250, and two of $100 each. These extra funds are set aside to promote the educational objectives of the Society and assure the continued high quality of *Bandwagon*.

Members are encouraged to plan annual gifts to the Society in order to assure its future viability. Remember, the Circus Historical Society is qualified by the IRS as a tax-exempt nonprofit organization, and contributions to it are deductible for tax purposes as allowed by law.

TRUSTEE TERMS OF OFFICE

At the opening session of the 2000 Circus Historical Society convention in BloomingtonNormal, Illinois on September 7th, the Hon. Dale A. Riker, a member of the Society, moved for approval of a resolution adopted by the Trustees in their meeting the evening before and recommended by them to the membership. The resolution amends paragraph 4.05(b) of the Society's Code of Regulations so as to correct an error. The amendment provides that for all future quadrennial elections, Trustees shall be elected for terms of eight (8) years each. This is to assure that every four years half the Board is up for election with the other half continuing in office. The motion was duly seconded and unanimously approved by the members. The Trustees' approval of the Code amendment was reported in the September-October issue (p. 27).

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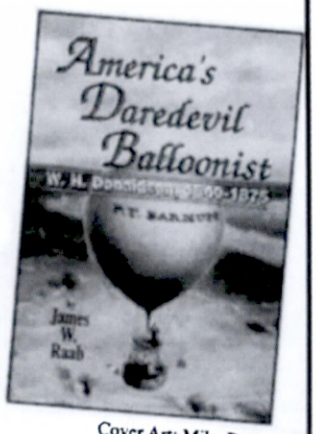
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RINGLING BARNUM CIRCUS

Coach History 1957 - 1972

By Robert S. MacDougall

This segment of the overall history of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus coaches will cover the rebirth of the new streamlined train up to the refitting of the World War II hospital cars at the end of the 1972 season.

PREFACE

The Greatest Show on Earth never ceased moving by rail, although it was considered a truck operation from 1957 to mid-1960. The elephants and horses continued to be moved by railroad during those years. Three Pennsylvania Railroad baggage cars were leased by Ringling-Barnum for transporting them from city to city.

The Ringling women sued John Ringling North and Art Concello for mismanagement of the circus which was a factor in closing in mid-season 1956. A quote from Henry Ringling North's book *Circus Kings* details the struggle: "My final trouble was caused by the forty-niners. In 1957, led by Charles Ringling's daughter Hester Sanford and her son by another marriage, Stuart Lancaster, some of them sued John [Ringling North], Concello and me for 20 million for mismanagement of the circus." There was a movement headed by Lancaster and the Ringling women to reorganize and keep the show under canvas for 1957. North hired Concello to put the show into buildings and transport it by trucks. The train was up in the air.

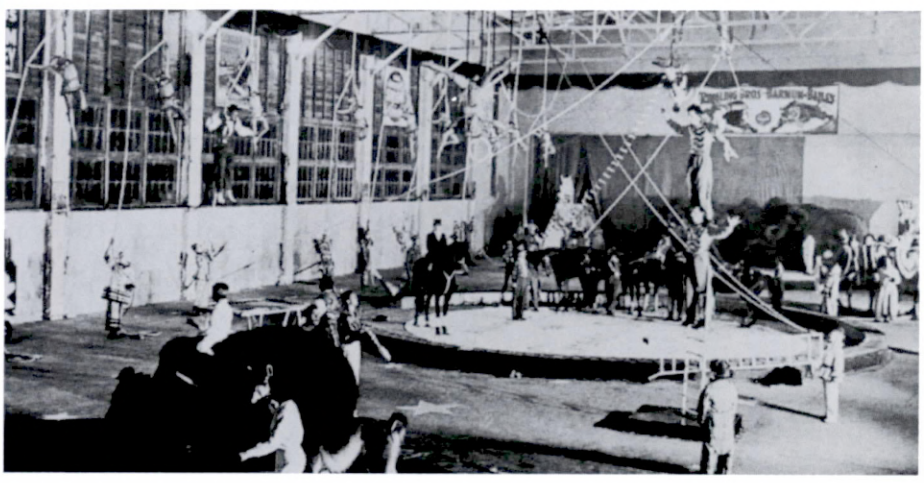
North and Concello were convinced the survival and future of the Ringling show was in developing a new production that could play to indoor audiences. Building this new show proved difficult because of a lack of funds and plenty of opposition from the minority stockholders.

The Adjustment Years 1957-1959.

The winter quarters were closed to the public and allowed to deteriorate. The equipment and train were idle and the harsh Florida weather took its toll. By February 1958 the Sarasota *Herald Tribune* told of a plan to sell off the animals and excess equipment. It was blocked by the board of directors. The 1957 production, the 87th edition, went into rehearsals in Sarasota. The show opened with the traditional spring engagement in Madison Square Garden. The company moved to New York City and Boston on eight flats, four stocks and three coaches.

A train list from the Dyer Reynolds' collection lists the three coaches as the *Louisville* 373, *Birmingham* 374 and *Washington* 375 is in error. A photo taken by Tom Parkinson verifies the number change on the *Birmingham* car from 375 to 374. This car supplied electrical power for the three coaches.

The 1957 rehearsals were held in train shop buildings. Howard Tibbals collection.



Coach 248 *Nevada* appears in a 1957 photo which contradicts with Reynolds' list. A set of photos from Dominic Yodice, taken in Sarasota winter quarters, of the departure of the fifteen-car train in the spring of 1957 confirms three coaches were present. The car numbers verified were 370, 248 and 374. Another view shows an Atlantic Coastline F-7 diesel pulling the train out of Sarasota. Next to the caboose are the three coaches.

After the New York City and Boston engagements the show traveled by truck and trailers, using ten semis, three straight beds and the 1956 personnel bus. Five ex-rail show LJ Mack trucks were converted to over the road use by the addition of 5th wheels. Each pulled a semi trailer. Five new Chevrolet tractors pulled the balance of the semi-trailers. The big tandem axle 1955 menagerie canvas truck, without any modification, carried the rubber flooring mats. The ex-1956 laundry truck carried the electrical department, and the ex-1955-1956 advance publicity elephant truck was used as a repair shop. The 1956 personnel bus was overhauled into

an office for show use.

This example of a typical railroad move during the 1957 season is from the Ringling-Barnum archives at the Circus World Museum. It is from the Southern Railway System, Passenger Traffic Department, Greensboro, North Carolina to Howard Y. Bary c/o Ringling-Barnum Circus, Sir Walter Hotel, Raleigh, North Carolina June 18, 1957. "Dear Mr. Bary: Referring to our phone conversation regarding movement Raleigh, to Charlotte, North Carolina night of June 20.

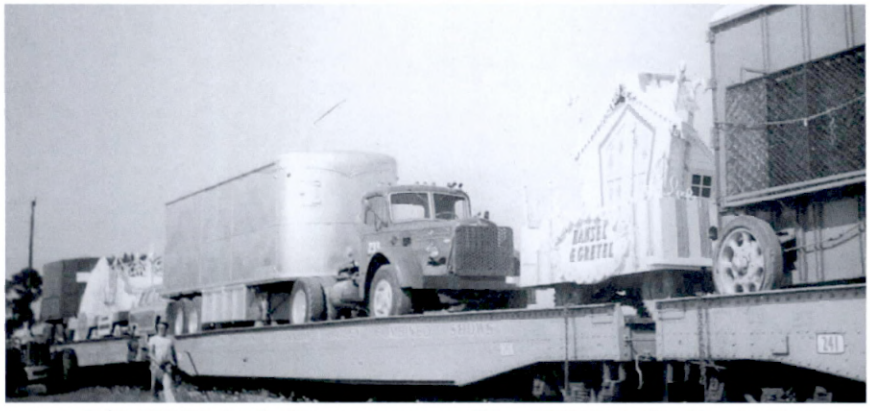
"We will arrange movement on basis, Ringling Bros. Circus: 70 or more persons, two baggage cars and two Atlantic Coast line coaches; and Barnum & Bailey Circus; 35 or more persons, one baggage car and one Atlantic Coast coach, and handle special leaving Raleigh 1:30 AM, Friday June 21, to arrive Charlotte, approximately 7:00 AM June 21, on basis of 150 unrestricted fares at $7.43, making total charge of $1,114.50 tax $111.45, for a total collection of $1,225.95, covering movement of both parties in special service, Raleigh to Charlotte, North Carolina.

"The three Atlantic Coast Line coaches are to be placed at the Southern Railway Passenger Station in Raleigh about 11:30 PM, night of June 20, and the three baggage cars are to be loaded at the Seaboard Railway loading ramp and delivered to Southern Railway on interchange track, for which no switching charges will apply.

"I expect to be in Raleigh Wednesday, June 19, at which time it is understood that you will purchase the necessary transportation covering the special movement Raleigh to Charlotte. Very Truly Yours, G. R. Yarbough Division Passenger Agent."

Additional information about the 1958 train was discovered in the Ringling-Barnum correspondence file in the Circus World Museum. Letters between John Ringling North and N. J. Schiavone, show controller, dated February 6th 1958 covered railroad movements and costs.

Moving the train from Sarasota to New York City and Boston, then returning to Sarasota, cost $26,347.84. Included in that total was $1,519.00 for a special baggage car and $1,005.78 for "other personnel transportation," four coaches, three stocks and eight flats were noted in the 1958 train.



The 1957 train loading in Sarasota winter quarters of the New York City and Boston train. Dominic Yodice collection.

After the Boston Garden engagement some of the spec floats were modified to fit into two former automobile transport trailers. The show's tiger act was carried in a specially equipped semi trailer to handle the small travel cages loaded crosswise. The steel arena was carried in a possum belly rack built under the trailer. The remaining trailers were large furniture type vans. The only equipment that displayed the Ringling-Barnum title were two high volume vans, the ex-canvas truck and the office bus. The elephants and horses were transported in baggage cars leased from the Pennsylvania Railroad.

The moves were paid for by the purchase of tickets which allowed the show personnel to ride in regular system day coaches. These coaches were sometimes moved with the baggage cars. The Tom Parkinson collection at the Circus World Museum contains a list of leased Pennsylvania Railroad baggage cars. They were PRR 6090 *Tannhauser*, horses; PRR 6084 *Mozart*, elephants and PRR 6094 *Edwin Booth*, elephants. This practice continued from 1957 through part of 1960. A fourth baggage car was used to carry some of the outdoor equipment and extra rigging.

Disposition of Equipment.

The August 17,1959 *Billboard* carried a story under the heading, "Ringling Prepares To Sell Train, Wagons, Tops, Tools.

"Surplus circus equipment from Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey's under-canvas days now is on the market. The offer to sell comes at a time when the circus itself is thriving as an indoor operation, and show officials stress that the sale is to involve only the railroad tent circus

The 1958 truck show in the Hollywood Bowl. Author's collection.





Planing the new train and show, l. to r. Lloyd Morgan, Tuffy Genders, Art Concello, Rudy Bundy and Bob Dover. Author's collection.

equipment it no longer needs. As yet there have been no sales except for three big Mack trucks formerly used to haul canvas, to a St. Petersburg, Florida dealer, who is expecting to export them.

"But many inquiries have been received over the past three years and now all of those persons are being contacted. In addition, the show has written to several railroads about selling them the Ringling trains, and response has been good."

The article further said, "Authorization for sale of surplus equipment was given by the Ringling-Barnum board of directors several weeks ago. Earlier, the management wanted to sell but minority stockholders blocked them.

"There was agreement this time that the equipment should be sold. Expectation is that the show will recover from $500,000 to $750,000 from sales of the equipment.

"Policy in the sale is that nothing will be disposed of which might prove useful on the present indoor circus and that nothing will be sold which might be used in any tourist attraction that might be worked out in the future.

"While no show official said so, there were indications that plans for such a tourist attraction already are in mind, although this may not be planned in Sarasota.

"The show did state it would not sell historic, antique or other special classes of equipment. The private railroad cars were being retained. For example, another story in the same *Billboard* was headed "Here's what Ringling-Barnum will keep from tent days.

"While Ringling-Barnum is hoping now to sell much of its railroad equipment, it is retaining two classes of equipment, one is that which can be used on the new indoor circus. The other is anything that could be used in permanently located tourist attraction in the future. Among the things the show plans to keep are four private railroad cars, including the *Jomar*, the *Little Rock,* the *St. Louis* and the *Bridgeport*."

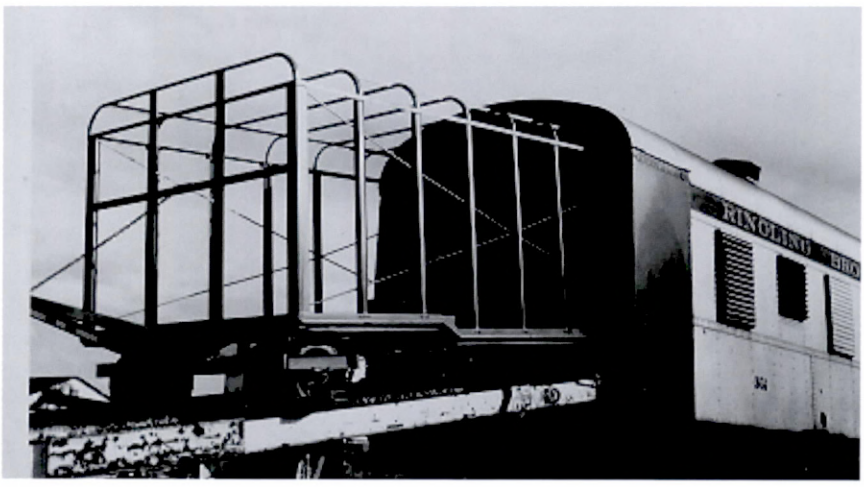
Plans for the New Train.

This article will not discuss the dismantling of the Sarasota winter quarters and the selling off of the equipment, except where related to the coaches involved with the continuation of the indoor show. Several articles appeared in *Billboard* in November 1959. Parkinson wrote one in the November 9th, 1959 issue: "Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus is disposing of its winter quarters and is refitting several of its railroad coaches so as to provide its own transportation again.



Lloyd Morgan checking new wagon frame in tunnel car in Sarasota quarters. Author's collection.

Testing new wagon frame in tunnel car for clearances, Sarasota winter quarters. Author's collection.



"The show expects to use at least three of its own cars, equipped as baggage cars and decorated with the Ringling name. These will replace the Pennsylvania Railroad's balloon-topped baggage cars in which the show now moves horses, elephants and equipment. In quarters a number of the show's coaches have been switched out to be refitted, and the interior of them already is being



Taking the new 15 car show into Sarasota for test unloading and loading prior to the jump to Omaha, Nebraska in July 1960. Author's collection.

rebuilt.

"There will be no flat or stock cars in the proposed new train, nor is it certain how many cars will be used. Top management said several days ago that three cars will be used and that the show would not carry more cars as coaches for personnel. However, on the scene it seemed fairly definite that five cars were being prepared for new use, and there were rumors in quarters of more being used.

"Of railroad equipment, some stock cars already are being cut up for scrap. More will be junked soon. There is continued talk about the coaches being sold in Central America, but so far that has not developed, and the show has decided to use some itself."

Tom Parkinson and Chappie Fox salvaged Ringling-Barnum artifacts by securing them for the newly formed Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin. This story appeared as an insert in main article, under the heading: "Sample Ringling Train Going To Baraboo Circus Museum.

"A four car circus train has been loaded at Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus quarters for shipment to the Circus World Museum. The show cars and wagons will be used in the museum to display how circus trains were equipped and operated.

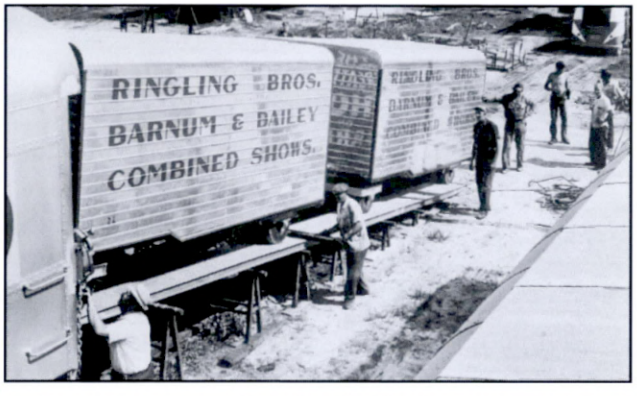
"The train includes two flat cars purchased from Ringling for the museum. There also is a stock car and a coach, both donated by the Ringling show to the museum. On the flat cars are eight wagons, including a stake driver, giraffe den, a cage wagon and baggage wagons used by the Ringling show for ring stock, elephant department, front door concessions and other purposes. Equipment for the 'show train' was selected by C. P. Fox, Deane Adams and Tom Parkinson for the museum and Arthur M. Concello for the show.

"Loading was directed by Lloyd Morgan and P. J. McLain for the show. Shipment was expected to start rolling from Sarasota to Baraboo in a few days. Bill Perry, quarters office manager and Fred Ware assisted."

Plans and details of Ringling-Barnum's new train were released in a story in the November 23rd *Billboard*: "The Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus is converting fourteen show owned railroad coaches to new use and expects to switch into a new style of railroad operation as soon as the equipment is ready.

"The cars, all former Army hospital cars and used by the circus until it ceased railroading in 1956, will include seven fitted out as personnel cars and seven more rebuilt as baggage cars. From the outside the cars will be unchanged in appearance.

"This action will eliminate the several semi-trailer trucks on which the show moves equipment now. It also will replace the three Pennsylvania baggage cars which the show now uses.

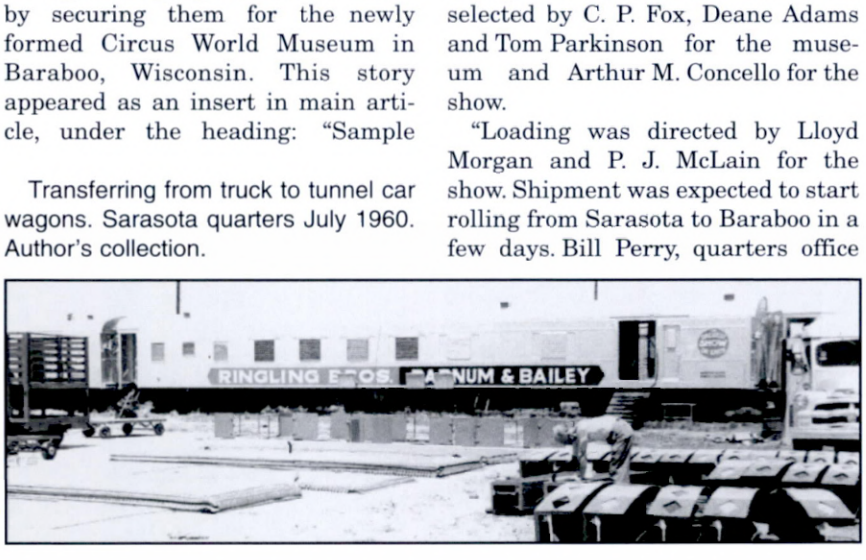


Loading finished wagons in tunnel car in Sarasota, 1959-1960. Ringling-Barnum publicity photo.

"The fourteen cars are set aside at quarters and have been getting much refurbishing under direction of Lloyd Morgan and P. J. McLain, recently hired trainmaster. Seven cars selected for conversion to baggage car use will be shipped to the American Car & Foundry Company where the ends will be rebuilt. Insides already have been torn out in preparation for the conversion. The car company will convert the cars into open-end style.

"The show train will put the circus back into one rolling unit again and improve its appearance, in the opinion of show executives. The title will be painted on the cars in larger letters than before to make the train distinctive.

Transferring from truck to tunnel car wagons. Sarasota quarters July 1960. Author's collection.



"Conversion of show equipment to this style of move is not expected to be complicated. Spec floats, tiger act cages and similar light vehicles on the present show will fit neatly into the cars. One of the new baggage cars will haul as much as three semi-trailers, it is figured. Elephants and horses will go into the show cars just as they go into the Pennsylvania system cars now.

"The transportation system would allow the circus to carry more equipment as desired. While the show has given indication it plans to do so, it was counted as possible to carry such items as an air calliope wagon or menagerie cages. There was no immediate indication as to whether the show plans to move its new train in passenger or freight service but its size means it usually will be making special moves. These circus cars could be fitted for moves in passenger service. In such passenger moves. the usual procedure is for the show to buy a specified number of first-class passenger tickets for which it receives not only use of passenger cars but also a baggage car for each block of twenty or so tickets. This is the system used in moving the present three baggage cars. This also is the system used by ice shows, legit companies and large orchestras on tour.

"Ringling's new train will put the show into a different category for transportation than any other show of recent times, however. The plan differs from the ice shows in that the circus owns its own cars. The plan differs from the traditional show train system in that it includes only passenger and baggage cars, but no stock cars or flats and probably moves mostly in passenger service.

"It may be likened most to the so-called 'car shows' of pre-World War I times, except that these usually were no bigger than five cars. Small circuses, usually using two cars, were in this classification. They were noted for the fantastic amount of show they managed to get aboard one coach and one baggage car. Ringling-Barnum is able to consider this and still keep its 'greatest' position because it no longer needs to carry tents, seats, power plants and much more that now is supplied by the auditoriums and arenas it plays.



Unloading train, wagons and animals in Sarasota for publicity photos as well as shakedown for new train in July 1960. Author's collection.

"The plan has been discussed with railroads, car builders and others and seems to have clear sailing now. It will involve carrying only two trucks or tractors, and these would be loaded on the cars, along with other equipment.

"The train plan has been rumored on the show for several weeks, but circus sources pleaded that the reports were premature and still in the tentative classification. About three weeks ago it was confirmed that at least three baggage cars, but no coaches, would be used. Now the full train of fourteen cars seems assured for use, probably with the opening of the 1960 edition of the circus."

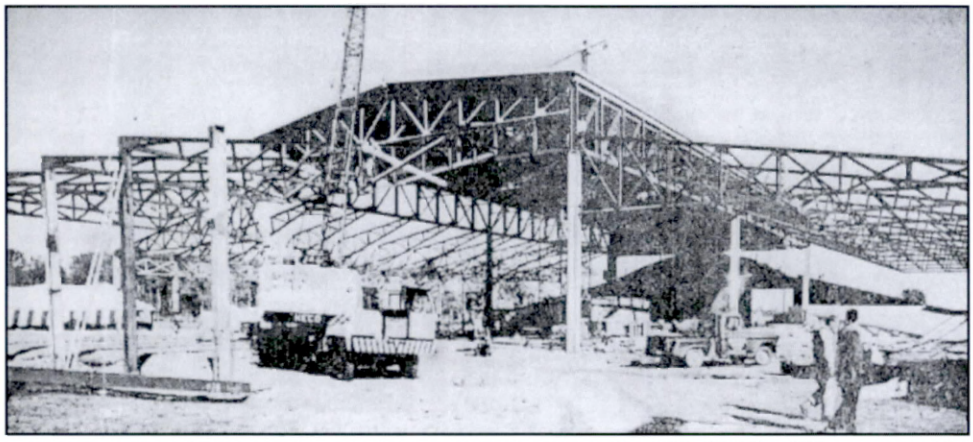
There were twenty-eight coaches in the Sarasota quarters in the fall of 1959. They included three old style cars and twenty-five World War II hospital cars. These cars were on an undated list which appears to have been made in late 1959 by the show and is now in the Circus World Museum's files. Some errors are recognizable, but easily corrected. For example the *Cheyenne* car is listed as 73 instead of 93. Car 245 *Wisconsin* is listed twice and 365, *New Orleans*, is missing from the list. *Chicago* is listed as 363 instead of 364. Number 121 is given to two cars. *Indiana* is correct, but 121 *Texas* should be 124. Other than these mistakes the list is accurate.

The *Billboard* stories refer to fourteen cars on the new train, when actually fifteen cars were on it when it left Sarasota. The show closed in Atlanta, Georgia June 30th and took the complete month of July 1960 to make the switch in Sarasota quarters from trucks to the new train.

The tunnel and animal cars were loaded in quarters and taken into downtown Sarasota where the show was unloaded and publicity pictures were made. The equipment and animals were reloaded for their departure for an August 5, 1960 engagement in Omaha, Nebraska.

Five Cars Sold.

Between January 1st and November 30th, 1960 five World War II hospital cars were sold by the show. The advertising car was sold first, going to the Circus World Museum on January 15 1960 for $2,500. The second was *Connecticut* car 247, sold on February 15 to Dr. George W. Griffith, of Orlando, Florida, for $2,500. The third car, *St. Louis* 372, was sold to Rudy Bundy on August 20 for $1,200. The final



View of new Venice winter quarters under construction summer of 1960. Author's collection.

two cars, *New Orleans* car 365 and *San Antonio* car 366, were sold to unidentified purchasers on November 30 for $1,200 each. Through a process of elimination we have determined that the buyers were Concello and C. R. Montgomery. Insiders seemed to pay $1,200 per car, while outsiders paid $2,500 per car.

Another five hospital cars appearing on a list of assets not presently required dated April 21, 1961 of "assets not presently required for circus operation." They were cars 367 *Bridgeport*, 369 *Little Rock*, 122 *Maryland*, 248 *Nevada* and 250 *Utah*. These five cars, the five cars sold during 1960 and the fifteen cars used by the new train account for all twenty-five World War II hospital cars.

The *Texas* car 124 was donated to the Circus World Museum. in late 1959. A bill of sale dated June 12th 1961, was executed between Ringling-Barnum and Circus Enterprises, Bill Perry and Jack Goodman, for the *Cheyenne* car. Circus Enterprises sold the car to Sol Walker & Company, a Tampa, Florida scrap dealer, on June 28, 1961. The *Jomar* private car and *Cheyenne* were the only old style coaches left in Sarasota quarters on rails.

List of hospital cars in Sarasota quarters in 1959.

1st section coaches

1. (c) 121 *Indiana*, three high beds, 1 stateroom
2. (a) (b) M-122 *Maryland*, 3 high, 1 stateroom, (2) DC generators.
3. (c) 123 *Nebraska*, 3 high bunks.

2nd section coaches

4. (d) 247 *Connecticut*, 3 high, safe, 1. Stateroom (McClusky).
5. (b) 248 *Nevada*, 2 high, 1 stateroom.
6. (c) 249 *Florida*, 3 high.
7. (a) (b) M250 *Utah*, 3 high, (2)DC generators.
8. (c) 251 *Idaho*, 3 high, 1 stateroom.
9. (c) 252 *Sarasota*, 3 high, 1 stateroom.
10. (c) 253 *Ohio*, 3 high, 1 large stateroom.
11. (c) 254 *Wisconsin*, 3 high.

3rd section coaches

12. (c) 364 *Chicago*, 3 high.
13. (d) 365 *New Orleans*, 3 high.
14. (d) 366 *San Antonio*, 3 high.
15. (b) 367 *Bridgeport*, private.
16. (c) 368 *Seattle*, 3 high.
17. (b) 369 *Little Rock*, private.
18. (a) (c) M370 *Pittsburgh*, 3 high, (2) DC generators.
19. (c) 371 *Los Angeles*, 3 high.
20. (d) 372 *St. Louis*, private.
21. (c) 373 *Louisville*, all staterooms.
22. (c) 374 *Portland*, all staterooms.
23. (c) 375 *Birmingham*, 3 high, 2 staterooms.
24. (c) 376 *Washington*, 3 high.
25. (d) Advertising car.

(a) These cars were referred to as "Motor cars," 2 generator sets.

(b) These cars were on the assets list as not required for circus use as of April 21, 1961.

(c) These cars were used on the new fifteen car train.

(d) These cars were sold and no longer belonged to the circus.

Information that clarifies exactly which coaches became tunnel cars, animal cars and sleepers has not been discovered. Photos reveal only that car 368 *Seattle* became a tunnel car and car 370 *Pittsburgh* became the generator car on the new train. The following is an "as built" train listing.

Aerial view taken of new tunnel car train in transit, Southern California, 1960s. Paul Tharp collection.



Ringling-Barnum new 1960 fifteen car train.

1. 20 Tunnel car (run car, generator and electric wench.)
2. 21 Tunnel car.
3. 22 Tunnel car.
4. 23 Tunnel car.
5. 30 Stock car for elephants.
6. 31 Stock car for elephants.

7. 32 Stock car for horses.

8. 40 Coach, staterooms for performers.

9. 41 Coach, 2 and 3 high berths for performers.

10. 42 Coach, 2 high and 3 high berths for performers.

11. 43 Coach.

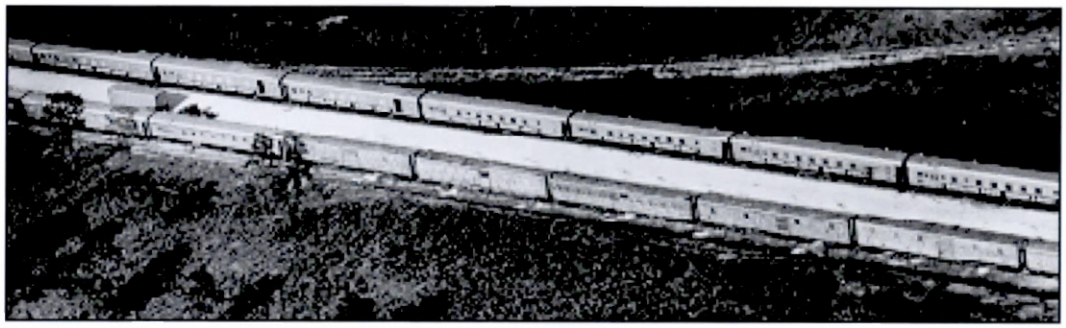
12. 44 Coach, generators and workingmen.

13. 45 Coach.

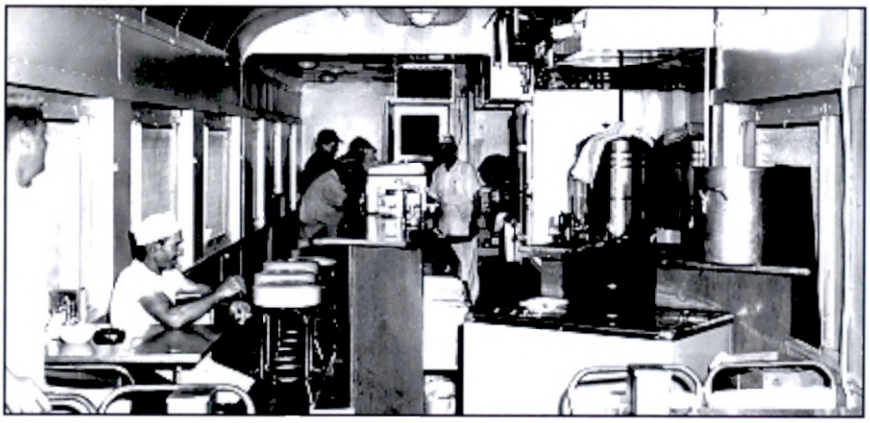
14. 46 Coach, staterooms for performers and staff.

15. 47 Coach, staterooms for performers and staff.

All cars were painted silver with white letters on a half blue and half red letter board. "Ringling Bros." in red and "Barnum & Bailey" in blue. The trainmaster was P .J. McLain.



Aerial view of Venice railroad siding during the winter of 1960-1961. Author's collection.



Interior of "pie car" 1960s, new tunnel car train. Author's collection.

When the circus returned to transporting its equipment by rail in tunnel cars a set of thirteen specially designed wagons were built by C & H Welding Company in Bradenton, Florida. There were five wagons with very small wheels, but with large volume loading capacity. One served as an office when empty. Another five wagons with less space, but larger and heavier wheels, carried props, rigging and trunks. Two wagons were built to carry the rubber matting floor cover. Both had upper decks. One carried the three sets of ring curb and the other carried arena props and rigging. A twenty-four foot wagon carried all the aerial frames and rigging. The aluminum pole A frames needed for outdoor dates were carried separately. A very short and narrow shop wagon was beside the tiger cages in one of the tunnel cars. This wagon was built by Charles "Smitty" Smith, transportation boss on the new show.

Ringling-Barnum wagons and equipment 1960 to 1963.

In 1960 the train and equipment consisted of:

9. Box, closed, short and narrow, shop wagon.

15. Box, closed, wardrobe.

16. Box, closed, wardrobe.

17. Box, closed, windows in front, office when unloaded.

18. Box, closed, wardrobe.

19. Box, closed, wardrobe.

20. Box, closed, props.

21. Box, closed, props.

22. Box, closed, side door, animal department equipment.

23. Box, closed, electrical, band and props.

24. Box, closed, trunks.

25. Box, closed, aerial frames and rigging.

26. Open top, slatted sides.

27. Open top, slatted sides.

Four Clark tractors numbered 110, 120,130 and 140.

Eight tiger cages, short and narrow.

One steel arena wagon, narrow flat bed.

Six narrow wagons carrying spec props and floats.

A concession semi and a personnel bus went overland.

The personnel bus and the semi-tractor met the train upon arrival. The semi-tractor was used to haul the rubber wagons and other heavy loads to and from the building. The personnel bus may have hauled lightweight wagons. Clark tractors

Tunnel cars after unloading in Seattle, Washington, 1963. Michael Sporrer photo.



pulled or hauled some light loads.

After the new train left the Sarasota quarters, the business of vacating the facility became a top priority. The story and details of the show move from Sarasota to Venice will be covered in another article.

Late in 1960 the show's Thrall-built flat cars were used to move the equipment being salvaged to the new winter quarters at Venice, south of Sarasota. The rail siding near the quarters site was very limited, located about one quarter mile east of U. S. 41. On parallel tracks was the private car *Jomar* along with five coaches, seven stock cars and one Warren flat car. The new fifteen car train returned to its new Venice home after the final 1960 engagement on November 24-27 in Birmingham, Alabama.

Homecoming to new winter quarters.

The November 29, 1960 Sarasota *News* told of the new quarters: "Circus days back as Big Top Train Returns To Venice.

"The 15 car train carrying a modern circus that plays only in top auditoriums across the country pulled into the siding at Nokomis at 5:30 a.m. and then into the Venice station shortly before 9 a.m.

"The circus days of old were reborn today in Venice as the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus pulled into the South County town, unloaded its compact fifteen car train and then paraded to the brand new winter quarters on U. S. 41 at the airport.

"More than 5,000 residents, tourists and retired show folk turned out under warm sun to watch circus history being made before their eyes and not an iota of the old thrill was missing.

"With old-time circus bandmaster Merle Evans parading and tooting his horn with the Venice High School Band, the entire circus plus the Venice official family and chamber bigwigs moved from the Seaboard Air Line Railroad station south on U. S. 41 to the new winter quarters where a small scale Madison Square Garden building is being completed.

"On hand at the winter quarters to supervise the final building details was Arthur M. Concello, executive director of the Ringling show, who devised the compact circus train and moved the winter quarters from Sarasota to Venice when Sarasota failed to indicate sufficient interest in retaining the show."



Aerial view of new Venice winter quarters in 1961. Author's collection

Winter quarters Details.

The new 15 car Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus train joined the cars salvaged from the old Sarasota winter quarters. They included the private cars *Cheyenne*, *Jomar*, one 72 foot Warren flat car, three horse cars, four elephant cars and five extra hospital cars held in reserve. The *Cheyenne* was sold for scrap in June 1961.

The new train required minimal work other than general maintenance, having only been in service for five months.

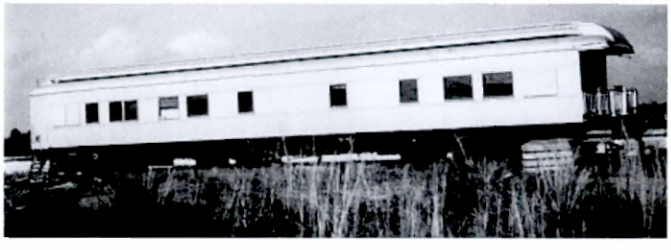
The main building was only partially completed. The roof covered only the three ring performance area. The main steel trusses had been salvaged from the former Sarasota quarters train and paint shop buildings with additional new steel trusses extending over the planned seating. The original plan was to use the tent show seat wagons as seating for the new rehearsal arena. The seat wagons were present in Venice during the winter of 1960-1961, but were never used.

The public was allowed to observe the new 91st edition being rehearsed, but without seating. The backstage and wardrobe was in an adjacent building that utilized trusses taken from the private car shed at Sarasota. This building had extensions on either side, providing space for the wardrobe and props. The animals were housed in tents.

The 91st edition opened the 1961 season in Miami Beach, January 25-29. The show had opened there the two previous years and would continue through 1964.

The March 27, 1961 *Amusement Business* reported: "Carl Sedlmayr purchased all the show flats owned by Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. The cars were built in

Private car *Jomar*, on a Venice rail siding in 1962. Bill Elbrin photo.



1929, 1949 and 1955. The sale of the cars by Ringling cuts their rail holdings considerably. In recent months the circus disposed of some of its other flat cars and has scrapped its stock cars. It is using fifteen coaches for the present edition of the circus."

After the Miami Beach engagements in Georgia and the Carolinas during followed during February and March. Washington, D. C. and Haddenfield, New Jersey preceded the Madison Square Garden date from March 29 to May 14. The Boston Garden and Buffalo, New York dates followed. A long jump took it to the only Canadian stand at Toronto from May 30 to June 3.

Moving west, the show was in Denver in July. It then went to the Pacific Northwest, playing Spokane and Portland. California dates took the show up to October. It then moved through New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. November saw stands in Iowa, Nebraska, Ohio and Pennsylvania. The engagement in Philadelphia was from November 28 to December 3.

While loading and assembling the train, a derailment occurred on the Pennsylvania Railroad at Philadelphia. The December 4 Philadelphia *Bulletin* described a train derailment: "Two cars carrying performers and another car were damaged at 10 p.m. last night. Pennsylvania Railroad switching crews were making up the train. Circus workers, helping to make up the train, said that there were three sections on three different tracks at the siding near 31st and Chestnut Streets. A switch engine started to move the middle section of four cars out, when the cars on the west side tract rolled slowly toward a center track switch. Cars scraped-the lead car on the west side track butted one of the cars being switched out on the middle track. One car on the east side track was badly scraped. The circus is scheduled to open in Knoxville, Tennessee on Wednesday." The article didn't give the numbers of the damaged cars. Knoxville was the last engagement of the season. Damage sustained in the derailment did not prevent the cars from moving.

To replace the damaged cars work was started on four of the five remaining hospital cars kept in reserve at Venice. When completed they were swapped for the damaged cars.



Signing of contract in the Rome Coliseum, transferring ownership from John Ringling North to Irvin and Israel Feld and Judge Roy Hofheinz, 1967. Pfening Archives.

In an article in the May-June 1962 *Bandwagon* Bill Elbirn reported on activities in Venice. He stated that four cars were being refitted on the rail siding in winter quarters. The cars were 369 *Little Rock*, another car without a number and coaches 24 and 42.

1962 Car Swapping and Number Changes.

A list made at Philadelphia on March 14-18 gives the running order of the coaches as sleepers 41, 43, 44, pie car 40, and sleepers 45, 46, 47, and 48.

At the next stand in Haddonfield, New Jersey on March 21 and 22, Elbirn made a list of the train make-up. Coaches were 40 staff staterooms, 41 girls car, 42 staterooms, 44 pie car, 45 workingmens sleeper, 46 butchers and single men, 47 staterooms and 48 staterooms.

The car numbers had been changed and some swapping had taken place.

A set of photos taken by Mike Sporrer in Seattle, Washington on August 6, 1962 verified Elbirn's list in Haddenfield. Sporrer photographed tunnel cars 20, 21, 22, 23; stock cars 30, 31, 32; and coaches 40, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46, 47 and 48.

Elbirn was in Venice again in 1963. A set of his photos picture the *Jomar* on the Venice rail siding. Bill Perry was using the car as the winter quarters office. A double exposed photo shows five World War II hospital cars of which four are in the new 1960 paint scheme. The nearest car is the ex-*Bridgeport* car with the double louver windows, similar to the ex-*St. Louis*/Bundy car. The roof vents distinguish it as the *Bridgeport* car. This car became the second horse car on the 1964 show. On March 19, 1962 a fire at the rail siding in Venice destroyed a wooden stock car in which the big top last used in 1956 was stored. Several wagons were also lost in the fire. None of the other rail cars were affected.

There had been rumors the show's train would be enlarged for the 1963 season. The author started keeping detailed records of the train and equipment in 1963. My list compiled during the Los Angeles stand on August 1-13 showed fifteen cars on the train. The numbers and contents were identical to Elbirn's Haddonfield list.

The 1964 train was increased by four cars bringing the total to 19 cars. The four hospital cars that had been derailed in 1961 and received repairs in 1962 were added to the train consist. Coach numbers 4 and 43 were added between coaches 42 and 44. A fourth stock car was added as well as a fifth tunnel car.

First new cars purchased since hospital cars in 1946-1947.

McCormick Steele, a friend of John Ringling North's, was given control over operations at Venice winter quarters in the spring 1964. Steele purchased five New York Central coaches, all 56 seat cars built in two lots by the Pullman Company. One

lot was ordered by New York Central in December of 1940 and delivered in August and October 1941. There were 45 cars numbered 2600 to 2644. An additional 50 cars, built equally by American Car & Foundry and Pressed Steel Car Company, were numbered 2645 to 2694. Ringling-Barnum acquired numbers 2645, 2669, 2670 and 2694. The fifth car number is unknown. These car numbers would indicate the cars were built by American Car & Foundry or Pressed Steel Car Co.

These were the first cars purchased since the 1946 and 1947 hospital cars. The New York Central cars all had two axle trucks. Two of the cars were made into sleepers and added to the 1965 show. The train of 21 coaches was made up of five tunnel cars, four stock cars and twelve coaches. The coaches had been renumbered as follows (cars were not in numerical order).

The 1965 coaches only 51, 52, 50, 49 (new NYC coach), 42 (new NYC coach), 46 pie car, 47 generator car, 45, 44, 43, 41 and 40 (there was no 48 car). This list was made August 29, 1965 at the Southern Pacific freight yards in Long Beach, California by the author. Charles Smith was trainmaster, replacing David Blanchfield. The 1965 season was the first time show opened in the Venice, Florida arena.

The September-October 1965 *White Tops* contained a story by Bonnie Watts, reading in part: "Train derail slows big one at Cleveland.

"The front end of elephant car #30 was derailed, four miles out of Toledo, Ohio going around a curve, a freight going the other way sped around the same curve and hit the front end of #30. The car was cut off the train and side tracked for repairs. There were ten elephants in the car. The show was going from Toledo to Cleveland the next day. The first show in Cleveland was two hours late starting because of the derailment."

The 1966 train was enlarged again from 21 cars to 24 cars. The last hospital car was added as coach 480. Rudy Bundy, vice president and treasurer, added his private car 66, which he had purchased from the



One of three World War II hospital cars acquired in 1970. Cars were 1945 models from the 89400 series. Carol Conway photo.

show in 1960. This brought the number of coaches to 14. One of the New York Central cars was converted into tunnel car 25.

The 1967 train was the same size as it was in 1966: tunnel cars 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25, stock cars 30, 31, 32 and 33; coaches 40 through 52 and Rudy Bundy's private car 66.

Ownership of show changes.

The indoor operation proved to be profitable under the various promotion companies. The show had increased in size from 15 to 24 cars. John Ringling North, then 64, was receiving offers to purchase the show. He and his brother, Henry, spent a good portion of their time in Europe. Both maintained homes there. Art Concello, Harold (Tuffy) Genders, Rudy Bundy and Lloyd Morgan ran the circus.

All engagements were handled by promoters in various cities. Among them was a promotion company called Super Shows, owned by Irvin and Israel Feld. They realized a percentage of the circus profits in the cities they promoted.

Irvin Feld's dream was to own a circus. He and his brother approached John Ringling North asking if he would sell Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. North had many offers to buy the Greatest Show an Earth, but never followed through on any of them. The Felds made an offer but couldn't raise the money themselves to buy the show. They then approached Judge Roy Hofheinz, a wealthy Houston business man of Astrodome fame, for additional capital. With Hofheinz as partner they proceeded to negotiate a deal with North.

The 1968 Ringling-Barnum program told the story of the sale: "New day for the circus.

"It was a bright and balmy day in Rome's historic Colosseum, the birthplace of the circus, when four great showmen met for a momentous transfer.

"After 97 years of ownership by the Ringling family, The Greatest Show on Earth was sold to Irvin and Israel

The 1972 train in Las Vegas. Horse car No. 32, one of new World War II hospital cars acquired 1970. Author's photo.



Feld and Judge Roy Hofheinz. Representing the most beloved amusement enterprise in the world was John Ringling North.

"After the contracts were signed North revealed that he had received numerous offers for the circus for many years and had always turned them down. It was only when the Felds and Hofheinz offered to purchase the 'Big One' that he finally agreed. North's long-standing relationship with the trio had convinced him of their concern and dedication to maintain the concept, traditions and artistic standards inherent in the world-famous title, The Greatest Show on Earth.

"At the request of the new owners, John Ringling North remains as producer of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey with his brother, Henry Ringling North, staying on as vice-president."



The 1972 train in Las Vegas. The 43 car girls car. Author's photo.

Expansion of the show into two units.

After the purchase of the circus the new owners expanded operations by forming a second unit. An agreement with Germany's Circus Williams, owned by Carola Williams, supplied animals and acts for the expansion. The little-known Gunther Gebel-Williams was the featured animal trainer for Circus Williams. The additional animals required more space.

Among the many businesses owned and operated by Hofheinz was one that resold surplus railroad passenger equipment from various railroads. Many cars were available due to the nationalization of passenger train service in 1971 with the start up of Amtrak. The Judge became involved in brokering surplus passenger equipment.

Surplus cars from the New York Central's 20th Century Limited and the Rock Island Railroad were gathered together and sent to the Venice winter quarters. The building of the second unit train started at once. One of the Rock Island railway post office cars #758 was selected to be rebuilt into a car that was half animal car and half tunnel car. It was numbered 29, which brought the total of cars for 1968 to 25.

Two units were operated in 1969, one was known as the "red unit" and the other as the "blue unit." The red unit featured Gunther Gebel-Williams and was given a new production. An additional coach was added using the fourth New York Central chair car. The fifth New York Central car that Steele purchased in 1965 had its running gear applied to the *Jomar* private car and the remains of the car was scrapped. The total number of cars used by the red unit was 26 in 1969. The rebuilt car remained stored in quarters.

The new blue unit train, made up of the New York Central and Rock Island cars, also used flat cars purchased from American Car and Foundry Co. The red unit received four brand new American Car & Foundry flat cars. Three tunnel cars, one NYC car and two ex-hospital cars were taken off the train. The NYC coach in 1969 was removed from the consist. The net result was a 25 car train for the 1970 season.

During the 1970 season three additional hospital cars from the 1945-built 89400 series were acquired. The author was told a story of how the cars were acquired by Frank Perry. He claimed two of the cars came from government surplus cars in Ogden, Utah and the third car came from the Philadelphia area. Perry said the cars were brought to Florida attached to the end of the circus train. This story has not been verified in any show records.

The new hospital cars were refitted for circus use for the red unit in 1971. The large plate glass windows were not replaced with the metal louver system present in all the other hospital cars. Two of the cars became sleepers and the third became the second generator car that also served as a workingmen's sleeper. The NYC coach that was taken off in 1970 was taken back in the consist. A 1944 model hospital car that served as a tunnel car was rebuilt into a combination car. It was built in three sections. One third was a shop, the center third was concession storage and the remainder was a sleeper. Bundy's private car 66 was taken off the train and a tunnel car was swapped for another car. A total of four cars were added to the train totaling 29 cars.

A new bi-level type flat car was built in winter quarters using an ACF system flat car 89 feet 4 inches long. Automobiles were on the top deck and animal cages were loaded an the enclosed lower deck. The train makeup of cars for 1972, with the exception of the new bi-level, was the same as during the later part of the 1971 season.

During the 1972 season late model aluminum cars from the Union Pacific railroad began arriving in Venice. A complete replacement train was planned and was being built for the 1973 season. Only the flat cars and the bi-level would be used on the 1973 train.

The author made a special trip to Las Vegas, Nevada on September 3, 1972 to photograph and take notes on the hospital cars that were retired at the end of the 1972 season. Frank Perry, a staff member, accompanied me as I photographed the train, making comments about each car as we passed it. We started from the 57 car end as the coaches were in one long line.

1972 Red Unit Train.

Car 57 was converted from a phased-out tunnel car. The car had a full door in the maintenance department end, used to store wagon parts and tires. The center of the car was concession department storage. The vestibule end had bunks for the Polish workingmen. It was a 1944 model hospital car, 36 inch diameter wheels.

56. Gunther & Sigrid Gebel living quarters, about a half car. Henry Shorer had a double stateroom in the center of the car. Jeanette Williams

had about one third of the car. It was a 1944 model hospital car, 36 inch diameter wheels.

55. Stateroom car. Dean McMurray, Frank Perry, Bob Weltz and Eldon Day. It was a 1944 model hospital car, 36 inch diameter wheels.

54. Stateroom car. Antoinette Concello had the end staterooms, Bobby Kay, organist and band. It was an ex-New York Central coach, with two axle trucks with 33 inch diameter wheels.

53. Motor car with two generator sets in the end of the car. Workingmen, two train porters were in the end of this car. This was the original generator car. It was a 1944 model hospital car, 36 inch diameter wheels. Note: All hospital cars had three axle trucks.

52. Stateroom/Roomette car. Bosses car, Andrew (Dummy) Robinson, other department heads and bosses. It was a 1945 model hospital car, one of three new cars in 1971, 36 inch diameter wheels.

51. Stateroom car. Performers, clowns, Elvin Bale had a double stateroom. It was a 1945 model hospital car, two of three new cars in 1971. It had 36 inch diameter wheels.

50. Stateroom car. Performers (mixed car), Hungarians, candy butchers, wardrobe department workers. It was a 1944 model hospital car, 36 inch diameter wheels. It was *Little Rock* 369 on canvas show.

49. Workingmen's sleeper. Props, riggers, labor department and transportation department. It was a former New York Central coach. Two axle trucks with 33 inch diameter wheels.

48. Motor car with two generator sets in end of car. Roomette car, performers, bosses, Dave Mullany, "Big Red" Gardner. It was a 1945 model hospital car, one of three new cars in 1971. It had 36 inch diameter wheels.

47. Pie Car. Mr. and Mrs. Theo Schmitt, pie car operators. Show had a small office in the end of the car. It was a 1944 model hospital car, 36 inch diameter wheels.

46. Stateroom car. Performers. It was a 1944 model hospital car with 36 inch diameter wheels.

45. Stateroom car. Performers, Eddie Ward, generator man. A 1944 model hospital car, 36 inch diameter wheels.



The 1972 train in Las Vegas. No. 54 car one of three NYC cars. Author's photo.

44. Stateroom car. Performers. A 1944 model hospital car, with 36 inch diameter wheels.

43. Girls car (Glamour car). A 1944 model hospital car, 36 inch diameter wheels.

42. Stateroom car. "Tuffy" Genders, general manager, one third of car, Vicky Unus double stateroom, Bob Hocum (mail agent) stateroom. A 1944 model hospital car, with 36 inch diameter wheels.

41. Stateroom car. Bob Dover, performance director one half of the car, Keith Killinger, band leader, double stateroom, Ty Chan, drummer, stateroom. A 1944 model hospital car, 36 inch diameter wheels.

40. Stateroom car. Performers. An ex-New York Central coach. Two axle trucks with 33 inch diameter wheels.

33. Horse car. Doc Henderson's old stateroom, grooms bunks in one end of the car. A 1944 model hospital car, 36 inch diameter wheels.

32. Horse car. Horses and lead stock, 12 bunks in the end of the car for grooms. A 1944 model hospital car, 3611 diameter wheels. Was *Bridgeport* 367 on canvas show.

31. Elephant car. Bull hands bunks in the end of the car. A 1944 model hospital car, 36 inch diameter wheels. Can be loaded from either side.

30. Elephant car. Bull hands bunks in the end of the car. A 1944 model hospital car, 36 inch diameter wheels. Can be loaded from either side.

27. Tunnel car. A 1944 model hospital car, 36 inch diameter wheels.

26. Tunnel car. A 1944 model hospital car, 36 inch diameter wheels.

25. Bi-level car. Built 1971 from a system piggyback car by Charlie Smith at Venice, Florida. This car was taken back to winter quarters on the tail end of the show train at the end of the 1971 season. 1972 was its first season.

24. Flat car. Built in 1969. 1970 first season.

23. Flat car. Built in 1969. 1970 first season

22. Flat car. Built in 1970. 1971 first season, was 28 in 1971.

21. Flat car. Built in 1969. 1970 first season.

20. Flat car. Built in 1969. 1970 first season (run car).

The train was freshly painted for the 1972 season. The color scheme was kept the same as previous years, silver cars with a large blue and red banner imprinted with the show title in large white letters just under the window line.

A new train was built in quarters from the Union Pacific cars. Charlie Smith left the show early to supervise finishing of the new train. Some of the old cars were kept for living quarters and storage.

Following the 1972 season, twenty-seven cars from the 1972 train went into storage on Seddon Island in Tampa. There were twenty-four World War II hospital cars and three New York Central cars, totaling twenty-seven stored. Disposition of these cars will be covered in another segment of the coach history.

The author wishes to thank the following for their help in preparing this article: Fred Dahlinger and the Circus World Museum at Baraboo,Wisconsin. Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Bill Elbirn, Dominic Yodice, Michael Sporrer and Frank Perry.

An Examination of Bear Acts

By Stuart Thayer

Of the large wild animals, bears on exhibit may have the longest history. Since they exist on every continent save one, they have interfaced with humans for thousands of years. Classical artifacts depict them as walking on their hind legs, and standing on their heads. Western iconography shows many such examples as well. A man leading a bear from village to village and having it do simple tricks is almost an icon of Eastern European culture. Along with deer and cattle, bears are unique in that they can often be led about without constraint beyond a simple leash. Their willingness to eat almost anything, vegetable or animal, makes their upkeep less expensive than strict carnivores, and their usual lack of aggressiveness, except in times of sexual excitement or in guarding their cubs, makes them easy to handle.

In America, this has seemingly denied them the popularity that lions and tigers, and even hyenas, have had with animal exhibitors. Since bears were usually worked in the open ring, they must have appeared to be less dangerous than those animals that had to be separated from the audience by iron bars. The ubiquity of bears have placed them somewhere between dogs and lions, too fierce to ignore, yet too tame to engender the onlooker's fear for either the trainer or themselves.

The early menageries kept some in cages and some on leash. The earliest mention of an exhibit we have found is 1828, but it is not conclusive since advertising concentrated on the exotic, and bears were too common to be in that category. Fred Dahlinger has suggested that in America, at least, bears were so common that they could not be considered unusual and, therefore, their exhibition was rather mundane, unless they could be trained in an entertaining manner.

There are basically three species of the family *Ursidae,* the brown, the black, and the polar. American black bears by far outnumbered the others in menageries, mainly because they are, or were, so numerous in the wild. Though classified as black, they come in many shades of brown as well. There is even a mostly white black bear *(Ursidae Kermode)* that lives in British Columbia. Its coloring may be a result of albinism.

Brown bears include the American Grizzly, which appeared by name in a menagerie as early as 1845. There is no way to be sure that the animals exhibited were actually grizzlies. Since it was a western animal, it did not come to the world's attention until hunters regularly went into the mountains. Alaskan Brown bears were sometimes misnamed Grizzly.

The polar bear *(Thalarctos maritimus)* was more rare than the other two species, again because of isolation, yet the first advertised specimen in an American menagerie is dated long after the first black. The very first polar bear found on exhibition appeared in Boston in 1733, on its way to Europe.

The art of wild animal training, of a keeper entering the den of a lion,

Cut used by Levi J. North in 1854 to advertise Sig. Capelano wrestling a bear. Author's collection.



Dan Rice special paper advertising Alfred Lovell and his grizzly bear. Pfening Archives.



began in America in 1829. By 1834 there were a dozen men pursuing the occupation. None of them were reported as using bears in their act. This could be because the animal acts were presented in large performing cages, not the modern arenas. George Conklin, a trainer and menagerie superintendent for over forty years, wrote in his *The Ways of the Circus:* "I think the worst animal to try and do anything with in a cage is a big bear. He is up on his hind legs where he can box with you. He has a most terrible squeeze, and, of course, a tremendous advantage in weigh."

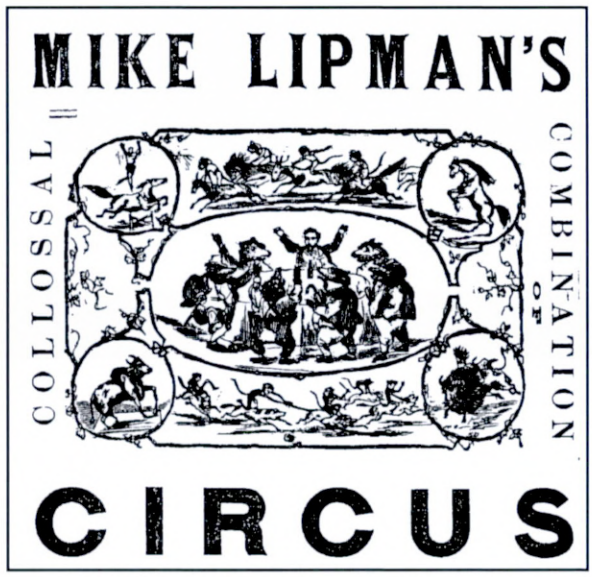
This may explain why bears in any number did not appear until steel arenas came into use in the 1870's. It required more room in which to display them safely and to advantage.

In 1845, Alviza Pierce contended with a so-called grizzly bear while a member of one of the Raymond & Co. menageries. Pierce and the bear were on the same show in 1846, but in 1847 nothing was said of the bear.

In the winter of 1852 Dan Rice bought or leased a menagerie in St. Louis, and shipped it to his circus in New Orleans. Part of the exhibition was Frank Hamilton's animals, including two grizzlies which performed in the open ring. In addition Hamilton also presented a jaguar, apparently uncaged. We have no previous nor subsequent reference to Hamilton, who was with Rice only during the 1853 season.

In 1854 Rice advertised a trained grizzly, without indicating who the trainer was. In 1855, Rice featured bear trainer, Alfred Lovell, of whom more in a moment.

Antonio Capolino (or Capelano) (d.1891) appeared on Levi J.North's circus in 1854. His was the first bear act for which we have any details. Capolino wrestled one of his bears; others danced, and were harnessed to chariots. Whether or not these animals appeared in a performing den or in the open ring is not known. In 1855 and 1856 Capolino worked for Rivers & Derious. He claimed that his were Russian bears.



Wallace's bear act as used by L. B. Lent in 1865 and 1866, and for Thompson's bear act in 1867 by Mike Lipman's Circus. Author's collection.

Den Stone advertised the Russian bear Nicholas in several acts of horsemanship in 1854. This could have been a man in a bear suit,

Adams appeared in this 1860 Nixon newspaper ad. Pfening Archives.

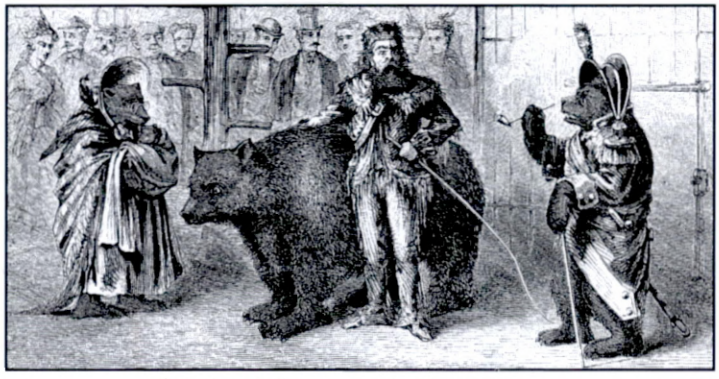


man-monkeys (men in monkey suits) were popular at this time, but there is no confirmation either way.

Alfred Lovell was the next bear trainer to come to our attention. He appeared with the 1855 Dan Rice circus with a trained "Australian" bear. There are no bears native to Australia, and we haven't any idea why he so-named his animal. It was probably a grizzly, as it supposedly weighed a thousand pounds. Harry Buckley hired Lovell and the bear in 1857. Our next reference has Lovell's Great Show, bear and bear tent being attached for a printer's bill in Memphis in 1859. That he had his own tent may indicate that he operated as a pit show on the various circuses. In 1860 there is an ad in Lexington, Kentucky, stating that Miller & Lovell's Great Menagerie and Variety Show was to appear there 28 July to 1 August. The only field show activity we have found in the Confederacy during the rebellion is a benefit for soldiers in Richmond by Alfred Lovell and his bear. Pete Conklin took a circus to Mexico in 1866, and Lovell and his bear were with it. In *Billboard,* Conklin reported that Lovell's California Grizzly bear, the largest ever seen, during a command performance in Mexico City before the Emperor Maximilian, closed its jaws on Lovell's head. The bear "would have killed him if one of the keepers had not come to his rescue. He was taken out of the ring unconscious, but quickly revived. He started to run, and I guess he is running yet. He has never been seen since." And, indeed, we have no further references to Lovell.

We now turn to James C. Adams, "Grizzly Adams," whose career has been delineated in two articles by Robert Kitchen (White *Tops,* March-April, 1977; *Bandwagon,* January-February, 1989) negating the need for us to go into autobiographical detail. Adams, a mountain man in California, captured a range of California animals that he put

on exhibit in San Francisco in 1856. Among these were three grizzly bears and several black bears. In 1859 he advertised as the Pacific Museum and Circus, which opened in San Francisco 7 May, combined with Tanner's Circus. On 11 February 1860, Adams embarked on a 100 day voyage to New York with nineteen cages of animals, which included seventeen performing bears. He set up at 13th Street and Broadway, according to the 19 May *New York Clipper.*



Grizzly Adams and his bears. Pfening Archives.

P. T. Barnum became acquainted with Adams' operation and convinced the trainer to move to the Barnum Museum. Barnum made an agreement with James M. Nixon to put Nixon's Equestrian Troupe (sometimes billed as Cooke's Royal Circus) on tour with "Old Grizzly Adams with his California Menagerie." They opened in Norwalk, Connecticut on 10 July, and went through Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, closing in Boston on 11 September. Adams, who was very ill during the tour, died in his home in Neponset, Rhode Island on 25 October. Someone other than Adams put the bears through their routines on this trip, but as yet his name is not known.

The bears were returned to Barnum's Museum after Adams' death. Kitchen reports that Barnum sold the California Menagerie, whether by lot or complete isn't supplied in his narrative. George Arsingstall, in an article in the St. Louis *Chronicle* in 1893 was quoted as saying that "just before the war," he joined the Dan Rice circus, which had purchased from Grizzly Adams a troop of trained bears. It was Arsingstall's first circus job, and after a rehearsal, Rice told him his demeanor with the animals was acceptable. A bear named Garibaldi was advertised as early as Rice's stand in Wheeling, West Virginia in May, 1861. An act titled "The Bear and the Sentinel," was part of the program. Apparently, it involved a bear surprising a soldier who runs away. The bear then picks up the rifle and dons the soldier's cap. How this was arranged, we don't know.

In contrast to this stands the *New York Clipper* of 2 February 1861, reporting that Barnum had sent Adams' bears to Havana from which they had recently returned to be put under Herr Jacob Driesbach's tutelage. Apparently, the exhibition in Havana was unfruitful. In a letter cited in Arthur Saxon's *Selected Letters of P. T Barnum,* dated 1862, the showman says he still has Adams bears. It may be that Rice only purchased one or two animals from Barnum. Arsingstall says "bears," plural. In any event, when Barnum leased several acts to Gardner & Hemmings in Washington in 1862 "Adams' California Menagerie" was included.

Lewis B. Lent operated the New York Circus in 1863, and one of its features was Wallace's Troupe of Acting Bears from California. We have no idea who Wallace was, but these would seem to be Grizzly Adams' animals, as the same circus in 1864 advertised them as Old Grizzly Adams' Troupe of Acting Bears from California. Wallace was moved to presenting a corps of dogs, monkeys and ponies. This was all repeated in 1865.

Lent went on rails in 1866, selling off his 1865 property in Lebanon, Ohio, in February, 1866. It was bought by Moses (Mike) Lipman, and included "Grizzly Adams' Bears." George Arsingstall answered an advertisement of Lipman's seeking an animal trainer for the 1866 season. There is no evidence of Arsingstall's being with Rice all this time, except for his statement that he "quit Rice and went to Lipman." Rice's biographer, David Carlyon, has no reference to Arsingstall.

The bear act was advertised in 1867 as "Thompson's Trained Bears," until Thompson was injured by his trained bull, and replaced by Arsingstall. Lipman's show went broke in August, 1867 in Reading, Pennsylvania. In December it was bought by Dan Gardner of Gardner & Kenyon, and taken into Philadelphia. John O'Brian now entered the picture. He supplied a menagerie for DeMott & Ward in 1868, for which he may have arranged the capital. It went out of Philadelphia with Thompson's trained bull as well as a comedy act of trained bears. This may be as far as we can stretch Grizzly Adams' collection. Nor do we find George Arsingstall again until he had established himself as a leading elephant trainer.

Yankee Robinson's advertisements in 1867 and 1869 give notice of the use of bears. The earlier one features Kit Carson, Jr.'s act in which he presented a team of bears trained to pace with another bear as their driver. In 1869 Yankee offered a man named Poonah Obja and his pet bear. Poonah, of course, is a city near Bombay, India, and this name may have been plucked from an atlas. Poonah bears were mentioned in early menagerie lists, suggesting a connection we are unable to trace.

As for the period between 1870 and the advent of big European bear acts (at Hagenbeck's *Tierpark* for instance), we can only guess that the estrangement between man and bear brought on by urbanization and industrial expansion put the bruin back in a position of being a wild animal seldom seen by people other than hunters or explorers. Thus did bears go from the familiar to the exotic.

Bibliography: Fred Dahlinger, email to the author, 29 August 2000. "Adventures of Pete Conklin," *Billboard, 22* March 1913. David Carlyon, unpublished mms. of Dan Rice biography. Various newspaper advertisements, 1733 to 1870.

A CELEBRATED RIDER
William Showles

By John Daniel Draper

A native of Perth Amboy, New Jersey, William Showles' (1857-1924) original name was Billy Christian. He was adopted at an early age by Jacob (1830-1912) and Elizabeth Showles (1831-1924) who performed on circuses in America both prior to and from the 1850s to the 1880s. Jacob A. Showles had come from Germany and was on Dan Rice's Circus in 1857. Among other feats, he performed an antipodeon act where he lay flat on his back on a horse running in the ring while juggling objects of all sorts—globes, barrels, crosses, tables, chairs, doors, etc. No performance required more quickness of eye, perfect control of muscles and delicate skill than this. At times he also appeared on the slack rope (Barnum's Acquarial Gardens in 1862) or as an acrobat, clown or horse trainer (Van Amburgh in 1881). In 1861 at the National Theatre in Cincinnati, Ohio he was known as the "Globe Sprite." On G. F. Bailey in 1867 he did his antipodeon act and presented comic mules which he also had on Yankee Robinson as late as 1875. He continued his equestrian antipodeon act on Dan Rice's Circus in 1877-78, on Batcheller & Doris in 1882 and on John B. Doris in 1883. He was also equestrian director and juggler on Dan Rice's Circus in 1877-78 and horse trainer on Van Amburgh in 1881. In the field of circus management he organized the North American Show in 1872 and Showles & Co's Grand Triple Combination in 1873. He died at his home in Long Branch, New Jersey on January 5, 1912.

The mother of Dan Rice (nee Dan McClaren) was Elizabeth Crum. Her first husband was Daniel McClaren. When Dan Rice was two years old, Elizabeth Crum McClaren married Hugh Manahan. A daughter by this marriage was Elizabeth Manahan, a half sister to Dan Rice. In 1861 Elizabeth married Jacob A. Showles. She possessed considerable ability as a manege rider and horse trainer. In 1856-58 and also in 1861 she was on Dan Rice's Circus. She was known as the "female Rarey" in reminiscence of the famous American horse trainer, John Solomon Rarey (1827-1866). She presented her horse Dun Eagle that year and at the National Theatre in Cincinnati, Ohio she was billed as the "equestrian sylph." After her marriage to Showles, she continued on Goodwin & Wilder in 1862, on Dan Rice's Circus in 1863 and on S. O. Wheeler in 1864. She was also horse trainer on G. F. Bailey in 1867. Later she was noted as an accomplished manege rider on Yankee Robinson (1875) and on Dan Rice (1877). She died at Long Branch on March 9, 1924.

It was claimed that William Showles largely taught himself how to ride the principal act. By the age of 10 he had become a bareback somersault rider and he was reputed to have been able to sit and stand on a chair placed on the back of a horse while it circled the ring. An early reference of his performing as the "champion boy rider of the world" was in an 1875 Yankee Robinson newspaper ad. There was a $10,000 challenge for his superior. From these early beginnings, he was to become in his prime "most supple and graceful, unrivaled and daring in his jockey riding act and great in his forward and backward somersaults."

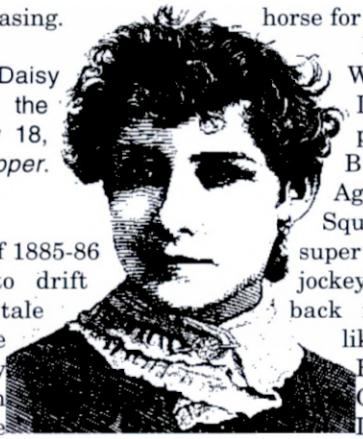
In his early twenties, Willie Showles had such superlatives heaped on him as "unquestioned boy champion of the world" (Dan Rice in 1877), "Czar of the world as a bareback rider" (Van Amburgh in 1881) and "at the top—champion hurricane hurdle rider—America's Pride" (Batcheller & Doris in 1882). During this time he was riding opposite such great principal riders as William Ducrow, Sig Sebastian, Ella Stokes and Abelardo Lowande.



A young Willie Showles. Pfening Archive.

While he was doing his phenomenal champion bareback act on John B. Doris in 1883, Sallie Marks, "the whirlwind bareback equestrienne of the world," was also a performer on the same program. She rode with "reckless daring, brillancy and unequaled dash. In her mad flight riding she retained a sure foothold." Previously she had ridden on John Robinson's Circus (1874, 1877-1879). Having just celebrated her 16th birthday two months earlier at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Sallie married Showles on September 27th when the show was playing Boonesville, Missouri. Through 1885 the young couple appeared together on John B. Doris. He continued to be the "champion of all champion bareback riders" while she was the "popular, petite premier bareback equestrienne of the arena,"

ever vivacious and pleasing.



This drawing of Daisy Belmont appeared on the front page of the July 18, 1885 New York *Clipper*. Pfening Archives.

During the winter of 1885-86 the couple began to drift apart. Their fairy tale romance became strained as they agreed to disagree. In this off-season Sallie remained with her father in Indianapolis, the winter quarters city of John B. Doris, while Willie took his horses to Long Branch, New Jersey. He went to Adam Forepaugh's Circus for the 1886 season where he did his great principal act, his bareback somersault riding and his hurdle act opposite, in each case, Sam Watson. This was the first year that Daisy Belmont and he appeared on the same program. She did a revolving globe act as well as her principal bareback riding. At this time she was publicized as the "finest trick bare back rider in the world in her bareback principal act, consisting of pirouettes over objects; backward riding and backward jumping over banners, side seat jumps through balloons and over banners." She used "two 9 foot banners and 30 balloons in each performance, finishing with hurdles over gates. Also her beautiful juggling act on horse back consisted of the latest novelty in bareback riding, viz trick banjo solo, playing banjo and juggling it at same time." In the same performance, Addie Forepaugh presented his tight rope walking horse Blondin and the Forepaugh troupe of elephants.

Sallie Marks continued on Doris in 1886 where her "wonderful feats of bareback riding" stood "without rival in Europe or America." She rode one of James Robinson's horses in the program, which, in addition to Sallie, featured the bareback riding of James Robinson and Ella Stokes, and the hurdle riding of Clarence Robinson. In the show's concert Sallie did her skipping rope dance. Later that year she broke a new horse for her act.

In March of 1887, Willie Showles and Daisy Belmont appeared on the great Barnum-Forepaugh Aggregation at Madison Square Garden. On that super show he did his great jockey and principal bare back riding opposite the likes of Don Geronimo Bell, Orrin Hollis and Charles Fish. In Display 6, Arena 3, Daisy Belmont performed her principal bareback act. Quoting the New York *Clipper* for March 19, 1887, we read: "Of the riders, Daisy Belmont and Adelaide Cordova [Cordona] seemed to be in splendid trim, Miss Belmont doing a principal bareback act in notably graceful style, though Mlle. Cordova (sic) exhibited rather the more daring. Orrin Hollis and Wm. Showles rode good, though familiar, jockey acts and Jerry Bell did his well-known hurdle act."

For the regular season of 1887, Showles and Belmont were on Adam Forepaugh. They rode opposite each other, he in his English jockey act and she doing juggling while riding horseback. Later in Display 10, Daisy did her principal bareback act while in Display 15 he did his champion somersault act. Later in the 1887 season, Showles performed his jockey act opposite Orrin Hollis on Barnum & London and also did a principal bareback act opposite both William Dutton and Hollis. In addition, he had time to establish a school at Long Branch, New Jersey where circus horses and bareback riders would be trained. He was under contract with P. T. Barnum to train some horses. On July 1st of that year Showles obtained a divorce from Sallie Marks.

In 1888-1889 Sallie Marks was with Frank A. Gardner's Circus in Kingston, Jamaica. In December of 1888 Willie Aymar, a member of that circus, passed away in Kingston and was buried the same day. At the same time Sallie was reported to be slightly ill. However, her condition suddenly worsened and she tragically succumbed at the age of about twenty one. She was the best known member of the Marks family and was considered in her day the greatest horsewoman in the ring. Never shirking any difficult feat, she had always been very popular with her audiences.

At this point it might be well to briefly summarize the history of the Marks family. The father, Hiram,



This Strobridge lithograph advertised Showles on Batcheller & Doris. Cincinnati Art Museum collection.

was an early ringmaster and scene rider who, before the Civil War, ran away from his home in Cincinnatus, New York to join a circus. He was with North's National Circus (1859), Lake's Circus (1863) and Welch's National Circus. About 1864, while doing his Pete Jenkins clown riding act, he was kicked in the knee and was laid up for two years. He had his trick horse Andy Johnson, on Mike Lipman's Circus in 1866. Also, in addition to being a Shakespearian jester, he was a comic singer and a notoriously funny clown. He was also an acrobat and a tumbler (P. T. Barnum and Sells Bros. in 1872) as well as a horse trainer. In that year the Sells show was known as the Paul Silverberg Circus. He finished his career in 1893 as ringmaster with John Robinson's Circus, the show he had been with off and on for 25 years. He died in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1910.

Madame Marks was a beautiful English rider and a dashing and daring equestrienne who performed with Levi North (1869) and on John Stowe's Circus (1870).

In addition to Sallie, the couple had two other children, Minnie (1860-1886) and William, both of whom were excellent principal riders. Minnie was a pad rider on Mike Lipman's Circus at the age of six. As the smallest and youngest equestrienne in America in 1869, "her sprite-like riding charms the old and enraptures the young." In her day she was reputed to be the "cutest lady rider of all time." After some time with Burr Robbins Circus, she eventually joined John Robinson's Circus (1871, 1873, 1879) where she first attempted bareback riding. About 1879 she married Charles M. Robinson, younger son of old John Robinson, and rode on the John Robinson's Circus for the rest of her career. She eventually became a bareback rider and by 1884 was a 4-horse rider. She died in 1886 of peritonitis.

William Marks was a principal bareback somersault rider and jockey rider who, between 1886 and 1912, rode on such shows as Adam Forepaugh (1886, 1891), John Robinson's (1884, 1887-1889), Ringling Bros. (1892, 1900, 1904), Royal English Circus & German Water Carnival (Chicago) (1895), J. H. La Pearl's Winter Circus (1894-95), Great Wallace (1896), Gollmar Bros. (1905), Sells-Floto (1906), Frank A. Robbins (carrying act with Clara La Belle, 1908) and Sun Bros. (1912). In 1887 he drove 40 cream colored horses in harness during the 12 day stand of the Robinson Show in San Francisco. As early as 1874 an ad in the New York *Clipper* had listed the following at liberty: Hiram Marks—clown & ringmaster; daughter Minnie—principal act, tight rope; Willie—rider of 2 ponies at once, bare back act.



William Showles on Barnum & Bailey about 1894. Pfening Archives.

Willie's wife, Jose Morton Marks, learned to ride and became a principal bareback rider after their marriage in 1884. By 1886 she appeared as an equestrian on Adam Forepaugh and in 1888 and 1889 she performed on John Robinson's Circus. In 1889 she rode in a 2 horse act with her husband and in 1891 on Adam Forepaugh she was one of three principal bareback equestriennes, the other two being May and Blanche Reed. The next year she joined her husband in a beautiful carrying act as well as riding a principal bareback act. In the winter of 1894 she rode with him on the LaPearl Show.

Returning to William Showles' career, his 1888 season began on Barnum & Bailey at Madison Square Garden. He and George Gilbert vied with each other in the principal jockey acts, both sustaining a high reputation. He also did his principal somersault act, competing successfully for attention with Jeronimo Bell, Martinho Lowande and son, Adelaide Cordona and Annie Carroll.

Later that season Showles rode his champion bareback act on the Sells Bros. & S. H. Barrett Circus. Others on the show were the bareback riders, Adelaide Cordona and Viola Rivers, also the great hurdle rider Don Jeronimo Bell, as well as Willie Sells, the bounding jockey rider, and William O'Dell, who rode and drove 23 horses on the track. Showles and Willie Sells were featured on a Sells Bros. lithograph that year and at Sioux City, Iowa, Viola Rivers and Showles were singled out for their very skillful riding.

In 1889 as the "prince of equestrians," Showles was among a host of excellent riders on Sells & Barrett. Some of them were C. W. Fish, Wm. Dutton, Willie Sells, Robert Stickney, D. G. Bell, Hernandez and A. Lowande. In the fall of that year, P. T. Barnum gathered a group of top riders from various circuses in America for the winter engagement of Barnum & Bailey at Olympia in London. Among them were William Dutton, equestrian director, and Showles, billed as the "supremely great and invincible champion bareback horseman of America and the world who defies the universe to produce his equal." Also in the group, among others, were William Sells and William A. DeMott, America's famous jockey celebrities; John O'Brien, 5 horse tandem hurdle rider; and Daisy Belmont, bareback hurdle rider.

In another brief diversion, we shall look at the career of Daisy Belmont. (1870-1896). The daughter of a showman, Charles Belmont, a ringmaster and knockabout clown, and Lottie Belmont, an expert manege rider, she first appeared in the arena on Courtney & Sanford's American Hippodrome in Chile during the season of 1873. She was carried by Micanor, the Italian equestrian, in his bareback feature act. On her return to America she appeared as a child wonder in terpsichorean specialties at the Theater Comique in St.

Louis. Ability as a child artist resulted in her being engaged as a concert feature on Cooper & Bailey Circus for a trip to California in 1876. After an appearance on Montgomery Queen in 1877, she again joined Cooper & Bailey for a tour of Asia and South America. She was in the concert company of that show through the 1880 season doing songs, dances, etc. On Maybury, Pullman & Hamilton in 1882, she made her first appearance on the rolling globe and did concert specialties until the show was sold by the sheriff in Columbia, South Carolina. It was on the revolving globe that she developed the remarkable balance that eventually made her a sure-footed and poised equestrienne. The next two seasons saw her on Harris Nickel Plate Circus. She was featured in the Stokes' riding mechanic act where she actually learned to do standing riding in front of the audience as the ringmaster explained the method of teaching circus riding. Toward the end of the 1884 season she was a principal pad rider on S. H. Barrett & Co.'s Circus. That winter she received training at Barney Carroll's school for equestrians where she graduated as a "capable, brave and graceful bareback rider." That experienced trainer said that he had "never had under his tuition a more apt, braver or fairer pupil." In 1885 Charles Reiche & Bros. operated the Van Amburgh Menagerie & Circus where Daisy Belmont was engaged as a chief rider. She rode "with a vim and an ardor that plainly shows it is a labor she delights in."

As we have already seen, William Showles and Daisy Belmont were in the same performances in 1886 and 1887. on the Adam Forepaugh show. At the very beginning of the 1887 season Daisy with her family had been briefly in Mexico with Orrin Bros. During the next two seasons, until her marriage, Daisy appeared on her family's Belmont Elite Circus. She and Showles were married at the close of the evening performance of that show on October 8, 1889. Afterwards, the couple's friends assembled with them at a hotel in Chicago to enjoy champagne and have a pleasant time until a late hour. The next morning the happy couple started for New York City to join Barnum & Bailey for the winter season at Olympia in London.

At the grand Olympia opening, Showles rode in Display 5 in Arena 1 while Josie DeMott was in Arena 2 and her brother, Willie DeMott, was in Arena 3. In Display 8, which featured jockey riding, Showles was in Arena 1 opposite William Sells in Arena 2 and William DeMott in Arena 3. Daisy Belmont did bareback hurdle riding. In London Showles was doing "his best to capture the populace by his excellent riding and exquisite shape." Daisy rode "just as well as ever and made many fresh conquests."

On March 1, 1890 Showles and his wife arrived in New York from London on the liner *Thrave*, the same ship that brought James A. Bailey home. The bulk of the show arrived four days later on the *Furnessia*.

The Showles reported to Sells & Barrett for the 1890 season. Willie did his bounding jockey act and also his extraordinary feats of bareback equestrianism in Displays 7 and 13, respectively. It was quite certain that Daisy Belmont was also there but no specific mention of her act was made in the route book. A New York *Clipper* article for December 6, 1890 mentioned that both of them had been re-engaged for 1891. A similar pattern of acts was given in the 1891 Sells Bros. route book. Very interestingly, Showles' name also appeared in a special Barnum & Bailey program for April 11, 1891 as a principal equestrian in the center ring of Display 7 opposite Archie O'Brien and W. O'Dale.

An extremely interesting interview with Showles, Daisy Belmont, Wm. Dutton and Polly Lee was published in the San Francisco *Examiner* in September 1891. Quoting part of the conversation with Showles: "The best rider that ever jumped over a banner could no more do his work on an ordinary animal than the fat lady in the side show could.

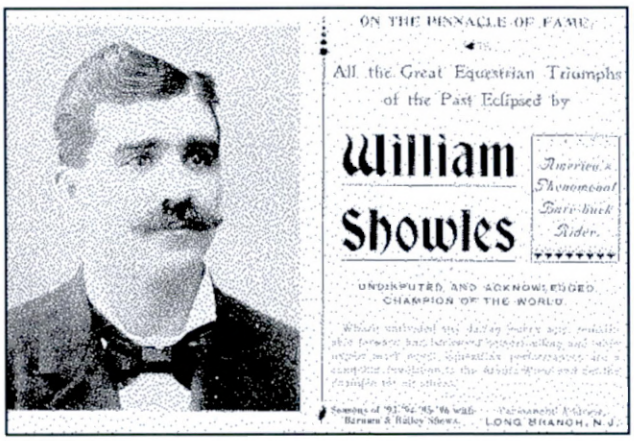
"The failure of a trick is very seldom the fault of the man. He never attempts a trick in public that he has not learned perfectly. He would simply be inviting a broken neck if he did. He goes about his business as mechanically as a bricklayer goes about laying bricks. He knows exactly what he wants to do and does it. If the horse neither tumbles or swerves, nor breaks, goes neither faster or slower while the man is in the air the trick will succeed. If he does any of these things it nearly always means a bad fall for the bareback rider."

At the end of the Sells Bros. season for 1891, Daisy Belmont and Willie Showles made the long trip to Australia with the show, sailing from the West Coast on October 17th and arriv-

Sells Bros. Circus used this lithograph of Showles and Belmont in 1890. Circus World Museum collection.



ing there on November 12th. They toured New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland. They returned to San Francisco on June 9, 1892. Showles made two presentations, his bounding jockey act and his somersaulting and pirouetting on bareback. Daisy did her amazing and artistic feats of juggling on horseback and later her dashing bareback equestrianism. While enroute through Australia, William Showles and William Dutton were busy training green equestrian stock. Back in the United States in 1892, in addition to William Showles and Daisy Belmont, the bareback riders on the show included Lavater Lee, William Dutton, William Gorman and Polly Lee.



Showles placed this advertisement in the 1896 Barnum & Bailey route book. Pfening Archives.

Daisy Belmont was ill when she returned to this country from Australia and never rode again. She died from Bright's disease on January 22, 1896 at her mother's Chicago home.

In December of 1892 Henry Pincus was the manager of the indoor Winter Circus at Broad and Cherry Streets in Philadelphia. Adam Forepaugh, Jr. was the equestrian director. In addition to Showles, with his somersault principal act and his English bounding jockey act, there was riding by Pauline Lee and by William Gorman. Forepaugh presented an equine dramatic school scene with 24 episodes.

The remainder of William Showles' riding career was spent on Barnum & Bailey through 1897 in the this country, the 1898 season in London and on the road in England and in London and on the continent for part of the 1899 season.

In 1893 his performance in Display 10 was described in this way in the program: "America's Greatest Bareback Rider, in an exhibition of the Most Fearless and Accomplished Equestrianism with Trick Jockey Riding and other originalities. By the Champion. During this remarkable exhibition of modern and perfect bareback riding no other acts of any kind will take place, in order that the attention of the audience may not be diverted from this principal act. William Showles."

In 1894 he shared the honors with two other champion principal bareback riders, Frank Melville and William Demott. Willie was in the center ring. The next year he shared these honors with Josie Ashton, appearing in the center ring, and with William Wallett. Showles was listed as the most renowned circus rider in the world, whose nimble feats while erect upon a speeding horse were universally praised. For 1896 he was in the center ring opposite the principal bareback riders, Lavater Lee and Ernest Melville. In his last appearances in America, the next year, he rode two champion principal bareback acts, one in a trio with Mike Rooney and Archie O'Brien and the other with Mike Rooney and Lavater Lee.

Arriving in London for the 1898 season, he was billed as the unparalleled principal champion bareback equestrian in Ring 1 of Display 8. In Ring 2 was the double bareback jockey act of William and Appolonia Orford and in Ring 3 was the principal bareback act of Alfred Clarke. On the road that season in England the exact same group of acts was offered. The London program for 1899 offered in Display 2 Ring 1 William Wallett, jockey act over bars and gates; in Ring 2 Thomas Sylvester, jockey act; in Ring 3 a most remarkable exhibition of champion bareback jockey riding by Showles.

When the show was touring Europe in 1899, he gathered some performers and left Barnum & Bailey in Hungary to go out on his own. In addition to the failure of the venture, he also broke his leg while performing in Budapest. This turn of events brought an end to his career as a rider. While in Europe he became a good friend of Edwin Hanneford, Sr., the English circus owner and father of Poodles Hanneford. Returning home penniless, he eventually secured a job as an elevator operator in an apartment house at 88th St. and Park Ave. in New York City. Much later, when taken ill, he staggered into Bellevue Hospital at midnight on March 9th, 1924. Lying there in a critical condition for more than a week, he kept himself incognito until a friend gave out the news that he was the one-time circus star. This report brought old time friends to see him, many from Ringling Bros. & Barnum & Bailey, then playing in New York City. On March 31st his condition took a turn for the worse and his wife was summoned. Before she could reach the hospital he died. In addition to his widow, he was survived by a 14 year old son, a brother and a sister-in-law. He was interred at Long Branch, New Jersey. His foster mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Showles, had died there at the age of 92, about three weeks previously.

About a year later, Alfred Meyer, Jr., an old friend living in Long Branch, related the following account. "Willie had told of the crude, stiff boy he was when Jake Showles took him in hand and developed him into one of the most supple and graceful riders the ring has ever seen. Mrs. Jacob Showles was a lover of horses. She drove her pet pony well up into her 90th year. She always kept the rigging Jake used in his act, that is the juggling pad." He "believes it is still in the old barn here. The old octagonal ring barn still stands where Billy trained his last horses, 'Beauty' and 'Billy,' which he took to Europe with Barnum and Bailey for the 1898 season. It will soon be a year since they have passed on to the celestial tanbark whence no rider returns."

Frank A. Robbins
a most successful failure

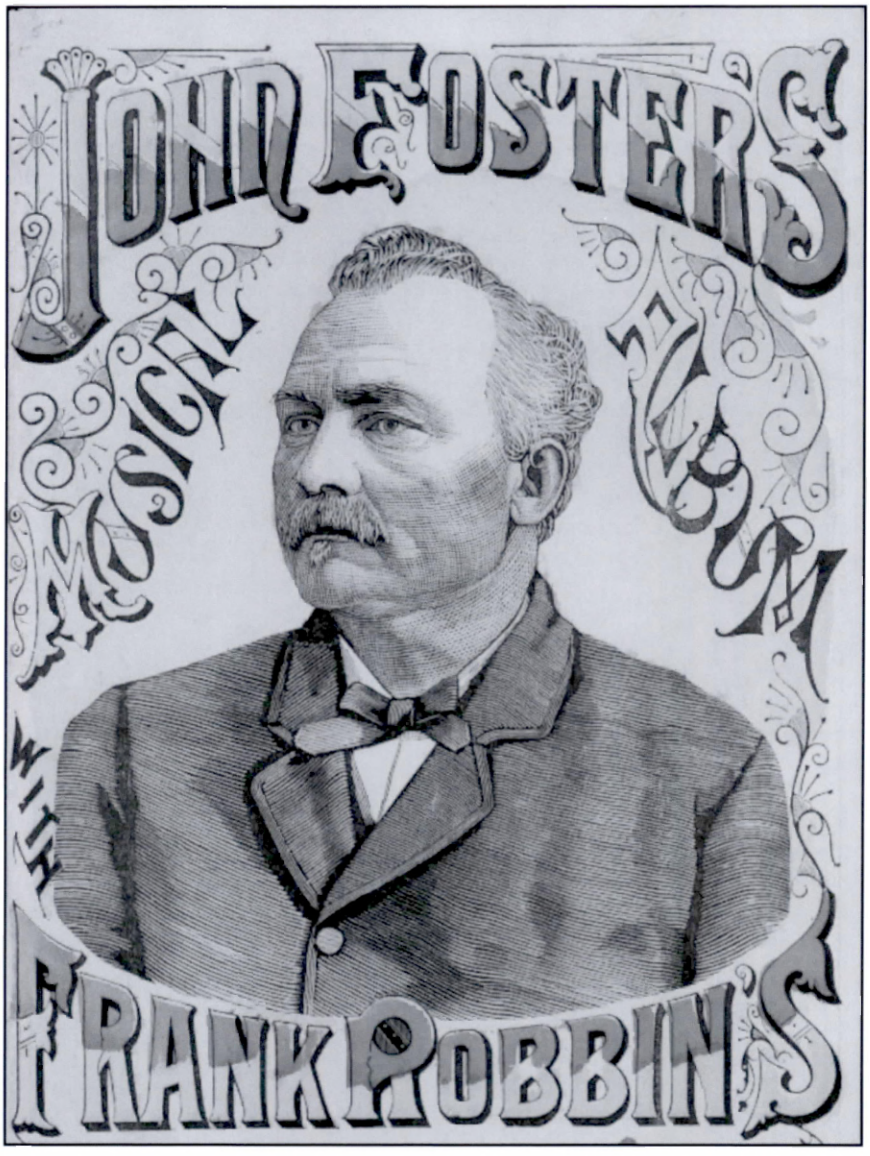
PART FIVE

By Robert Sabia

1889
Go West, Young Man

The various official and semi-official favorable reports on the results of the 1888 season notwithstanding, things were not well with the show. The 1888 tour was at best marginally successful, certainly inadequate to cover outstanding notes. Robbins was not only burdened by the financial disaster of his winter circus, but by the existence of a chattel mortgage on the show's physical property, required in all probability to get the company out in the spring of 1888. The chattel mortgage was held by the Union National Bank of Frenchtown, New Jersey. When Robbins was unable to cover the money due at the end of the season, Union National reluctantly seized the animals and equipment and auctioned them off on January 4th, 1889 in Frenchtown. It was locally reported that a number of the animals were purchased by Mrs. Eliza O'Brien, wife of showman John O'Brien, of Philadelphia. In the January 9th issue of the *Hunterdon Republican,* it was observed that "[t]he horses and menagerie were sold in the morning across the river [the Delaware], on the Magee farm, and realized $3,788.25, while the wagons and other paraphernalia were put upon in the afternoon at another sale in the foundry buildings." She also purchased some paraphernalia, Lucius Foster, former boss canvasman and soon to be again for the 1889 season, bought the sideshow tent and fixtures. John W. Holmes, another good friend of Robbins' and a museum and theatre manager from Brooklyn, purchased many of the remaining horses and wagons. The actual bidding for Holmes was done by Milton Gray, Esq. At this point, the auction was closed for the day to reconvene the next day. It was not for an undisclosed reason. The rail cars were not sold. The auction was well attended by numerous show men, including Adam Forepaugh, Jr., but bidding was not intense. The prices realized were cited as being very low. Interestingly, the friendship between Holmes and Robbins was noted in one of local papers. It was stated that Robbins would probably take out a show in the spring.

As the remaining property covered by the chattel mortgage was never



Circus songster used by Robbins around 1889. Pfening Archives.

offered for sale, it may be that Holmes made a *sub rosa* offer for it that was acceptable to the bank because of the apparent lack of interest in the equipment. I doubt that the bank had any intent to go into the circus business itself and as such, it must have developed a definitive plan for the remaining physical property some time on Friday evening after the auction was closed for the day. Ergo, Holmes' presence loomed important to the bank's actions. Although the chattel mortgage was the only obligation that was addressed in the press, there apparently were others. As the end of the 1889 season will evidence, certain employees, including staffers and performers, were also owed monies for services rendered in 1888. These folks, forlorn realists, recognized that there wasn't any money in the till to pay them. Therefore they signed on for 1889 based upon their belief that 1888 was an aberration and 1889 successes would be the basis for being paid in full. Realism here is not defined to include the ability to prognosticate as they would soon learn.

The circus auction was quickly followed with a report in the January 19th *Clipper* that the Frank A. Robbins Show had signed the following personnel for the 1889 season: Frank A. Robbins, manager; William C. Loper, assistant manager (repeater); Clarence E. Allen, treasurer (repeater); O. J. Boyd, general agent and railroad contractor (repeater); Lucius Fisher (sic Foster), master of canvas (repeater); Henry Sylvester, programmes and stereopticon brigade (repeater); Andrew Gaffney, router of the parades (repeater); John Burke, manager of outside tickets (repeater); Robert Fisher, chief of the detective force; D. S. Vernon, railroad contracting agent; W. J. Doris, sideshow manager, Capt. Frank M Kelsh, special agent; R. M. Drake, contacting agent; Oliver Babcock, publication and press agent; George S. Kelding, manager of advertising car #1; and Albert Rothchild, manager of advertising car #2. Many of these gentlemen in key positions were holdovers from 1888 which is a strong indication of the confidence in the show's future that Robbins could generate in colleagues. Of course, confidence is often predicated upon a well defined plan of success and even at this early date, it seems that Robbins had such a plan. If the east coast was overly populated by large, aggressive shows, there were areas in the world (that's correct, "world") that were not circus'd out. And where might these virgin territories be? The west coast to be sure and how about Australia? From all reports, James A. Bailey made his first fortune there and the Sells Bros. did likewise. At least, this was what was reported in the professional journals. Australian gold! Life is certainly exciting.



Robbins newspaper ad used in 1889. Author's collection.

Preparing for the on coming season, Robins sought workmen for various departments. Of interest, in addition to Foster, John Kent was identified as the trainmaster, E. S. West as head cook tent, and Harry Kim in charge of the menagerie. He was also offering for sale one 50 foot Laconia built flat car, a 40 foot stock car built by Barney & Smith & Co. and a box sleeper holding 64 people (they must have been sleeping standing up). This treasure chest of transportation could be had for $1,000. With a Call Ad in the April 6th *Clipper* came the disclosure that this onrushing season would indeed be different. The show was opening in Washington, New Jersey instead of Frenchtown. Was this an indication that Robbins, who had excellent relations with the general populous of Frenchtown, was embarrassed by the obvious downsizing of the show? Further, could it be that the fact that he was still in charge, but no longer the owner (J. W. Holmes owned most if not all of the physical property), contributed to this routing decision? It is not known but as we shall see, the show was only a shell of its former self and certainly not on the fast track within the circus community. In the April 3rd edition of the *Frenchtown Star*, it was stated that Robbins was the business manager but Holmes was the "chief stockholder." In the same paper, it was stated that two car loads of show wagons came to Frenchtown on April 2nd. From where and for what purpose was not related. The show embarked for nearby Washington on April 17th and bade a farewell to Frenchtown that covered the next 22 years. The

show carried the title from 1888, Frank A. Robbins' Wild West, Hippodrome, Caravan, Circus, Menagerie, Aviary and Aquarium. As it would for many years in the future, its newspaper ads frequently mentioned its engagement at the American Institute in New York City. Interestingly, none of the ads identified any of the individual performers. The ads did feature the Quadrille Elephants which were such a hit in past years. Unfortunately, these elephants were not on the show, having been returned to Adam Forepaugh at the end of the 1888 season. From sundry local newspaper's reports, it appears only two elephants remained. Performers who are believed to be on the show included Harry Kirim, (formerly of the Reiche Bros.); Edmund Shipp; Andrew Gaffney, cannonball strongman (repeater); Alfred Dorian; the Albion Family; M'lle Leona, bareback rider; James Peres, bareback rider; perhaps Charles Fish, equestrian (repeater?); and W. M. Crane, sideshow performer. William Milligen (repeater) headed the concert with Petite and White (repeaters).

Throughout the spring, Robbins advertised for performers of various skills. When one considers the headliners of previous seasons, the show was certainly weaker. It appears that it became a one-ring affair. In spite of the slimming down, the performance was generally applauded by audiences, particularly during the early season. As events evolved, it seems that there were significant departures of performers later in the season, directly affecting the quality of the performance.

The journey to Washington was accomplished over a four day period. The tents and general paraphernalia arrived on Tuesday, the animals on Thursday, and the performers came from Tuesday to Friday. The show was in its altogether for its opening performance on Saturday afternoon, April 20. Attendance was not as good as anticipated given the amount of excitement that the show caused because of its presence over the past few days. All chances for a recovery in the evening were dashed by a severe storm which struck around 7 p. m. About 100 tickets had been sold when the big top blew down in the wind, rain and hail. Panic ensued and the patrons and employees alike scattered in every direction. A number of people fell in a large ditch near the wrecked tents and wagons. Amazingly, no serious causalities resulted, but numerous individuals sustained minor injuries. The residue was loaded haphazardly into



the wagons during the cold, rainy dark night, and the show entrained for its Monday date at Newton, New Jersey, a relatively short 25 miles distance. Sunday was spent in Newton repairing the damage to the big top and its internals. Their work was overviewed by hundreds of locals who applauded the substantial efforts being made. Fair attendance on Monday turned out for both performances in very chilly weather. However, those who viewed it were very pleased with the trapeze and wire acts, the cowboys, as well as the riders, and demonstrations of athleticism. As we shall repeatedly observe throughout the season, Robbins' herd of sharpies was present in force at both Washington and Newton, doing what it did best. Such activities must have had the support of the local police because in those locales where the sheriff said no, grift didn't occur. The North-Central Jersey communities of Chester and Boonton followed, with reports of fleecing of the public comprising the body of the afternotices. On April 25th, the county seat of Morristown was played to very good crowds at both performances. The local marshall informed the show that there wasn't to be any swindling, and remarkably there wasn't.

Friday found the show at the large town of Orange. Unfortunately, heavy rains were also day and dating, and the troupe lost the night performance after reaping a gross of $200 at the afternoon showing. To make matters worse, a sleeping car broke an axle, derailing the car which blocked the main line. A wrecker was dispatched from Hoboken and it was morning before the tracks were cleared. Completing the first full week, the company attempted to play Passaic to no avail. In pouring rain and deep mud, the show struggled to get to the lot and erect the tents. After a college try, Robbins thought better of it and departed for a Monday stand at Peekskill, New York on the other side of the Hudson. It is doubted that much time was devoted by Messrs. Holmes and Robbins to counting their profits from the first seven stands. Some April showers, they were more like biblical floods; maybe May would be better—it certainly couldn't be worse.

Although the weather continued rainy and chilly, business improved substantially. Attendance was described as immense at Yonkers on May 1 to very pleased patrons. This was repeated the next day at Mount Vernon, just 10 miles to the east. The reviewer was enamored by the snake charmer who by her sterling manner and interesting personality was poetry of motion in what was normally a shoddy spectacle. Also mentioned were the pretzel man, the trapeze act and the strongman. Two short hops of ten or so miles took the circus to Port Chester, New York, and Stamford, Connecticut. At the former stand on May 3, the reviewer loved the performance, particularly the trapeze and cowboys acts, but hated the "horrible reptiles." He went on a diatribe about those slimy creatures. He seemed to hate the snakes even more than the pickpock-

ets and other unscrupulous characters who followed the show, whom he also noted. Good crowds met the troupe at Stamford on Saturday the 4th. The bareback riding, trapeze, sparring and tight rope walking received favorable mention. The paper did observe that the "menagerie was about the slimmest assemblage to which that big word was ever applied, even in circus poster literature." This reveals a major cutback from prior years. Another short jump to South Norwalk on the 6th found very large crowds who were impressed by the excellent performance.

A change in direction to the north took the show into Birmingham (Derby), at the confluence of the Naugatuck and Housatonic Rivers, whose population turned out in force. Continuing north along the Naugatuck River, Robbins visited Naugatuck for the first time. The very large evening attendance was attributed to the excellent word-of-mouth from those folks who spent the afternoon viewing the superior performance. On Friday May 10 at Torrington, great crowds were found at both performances despite the torrential downpour in the afternoon. The sharpies garnered afternotices equal to the performers which probably was evidence of a well rounded show. After loading the flat cars at night and shunting them about, one broke away and started for a nearby town by itself. Fortunately or unfortunately, the car ran into the sleepers which were parked on the main line near the circus lot. Three of the sleepers were damaged, two of which departed to the maintenance shops at New Haven for repair. The paper stated that the show traveled on sixteen cars, mostly 60 feet long. The company closed out a very good week at Winsted, Connecticut, and then headed into western Massachusetts for two weeks of stands.

An item of general circus and New York State historical interest was carried in the Winsted paper. Obvious anyone who has seen it, the Hudson River is a formidable flow of water from its mouth at the Narrows (between Brooklyn and Staten Island) to its head of navigation at Albany. Generally it is well over a mile in width and possesses a swift current challenging ships and swimmers alike. Throughout its settling by the European population (almost 300 years), there had been many projects to bridge the river but they foundered primarily because of the herculean engineering task that bridging represented. Finally in the late 1880's the railroad put together the wherewithal to erect a steel-cast iron structure at Poughkeepsie (about 50 miles north of New York City). The structure exists today although it has not been in use for years. It still is impressive. The Winsted article stated in pertinent part, "[I]t is announced that the first paying train over the Poughkeepsie bridge will be Barnum's circus of forty cars on the 25th of May, and a grand bridge opening celebration is one of the sensations promised out in



that section for the Fourth of July. [The show was traveling from Newburgh, New York to Poughkeepsie.] It is well to give the big bridge a thorough test at the outset, and a Barnum circus train ought to be a satisfactory one. If the 'Greatest Show on Earth' can go over the great structure without collapsing it there will be a good show for those who follow to go over it in safety. It seems too bad that the big elephant Jumbo couldn't live long enough to join the 'innumerable caravan' on this momentous occasion but as elephants have a natural antipathy to bridges, Jumbo might have got his back up about it and possibly evolved himself into a camel, before he was safely landed on the opposite shore." Another first for P.T.!

After its stint in Massachusetts, the circus started its western trek. On May 27th, the show visited the industrial town of Gloversville, New York. Although it rained most of the day, the show did a fair amount of business with the rural districts being well represented. The circus was accompanied by an unusual number of gambling sharks who preyed upon the local not so innocents. The old homestead of Herkimer was played in cold weather to satisfactory business. Moving westerly rapidly, the troupe scheduled Seneca Falls on May 29 and Attica before reaching the large city of Buffalo for a single day stand on the 31st. Despite foul weather, good business resulted and the sophisticated audience especially enjoyed M'lle. Leona, James Peres and Charles Fish in their riding presentations. There were a half dozen clowns who amused the patrons who had to use their umbrellas to avoid drowning under the big top. A short jump to Towanda, completed the New York tour.

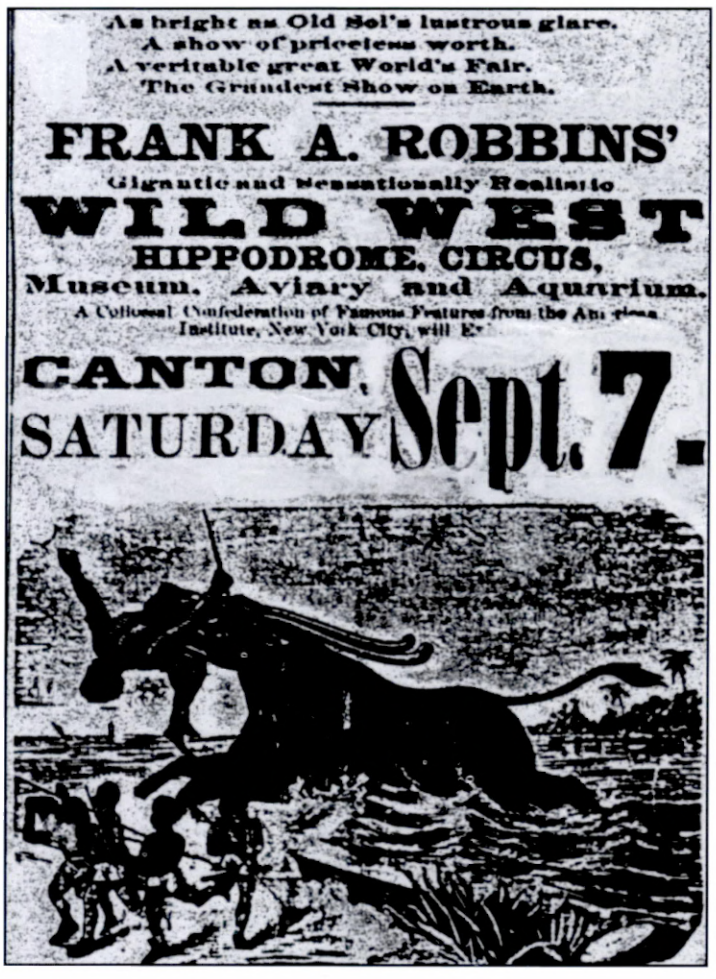
A rapid dash across Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, placed the show in Kansas City, Missouri on June 10th. Then for the next two weeks, the company traversed Nebraska where second thoughts about the west coast and beyond must have been germinating. Robbins advertised for riders, gymnasts, acrobats, specialty people etc. in the *Clipper* of June 29th. Looking for such a broad expanse of talent that far into the season generally indicated a large number of performers had left the show which in turn meant that salaries were not being paid promptly. This, of course, reflects poor business. Of interest, Robbins' address was Portland, Oregon. He must have been conducting his final review of the business potential there before committing the show to the substantial railroad expense of huge jumps enroute to the promised land. Also, in the same issue of the *Clipper*, his partner, J. W. Holmes, was still trying to sell the stock and flat cars, and

the box sleeper. Added to this group was now a "Fine Advertising Car."

Since leaving New York state, the only news item on the troupe in the *Clipper* was a tidbit sent in by a local correspondent at Leadville, Colorado for the June 24th date there. It gives a flavor of what may be fairly representative of the times. The afternoon business was poor while the evening garnered a fairly filled tent. The performance was much better than anticipated. However three or four of the riding acts were inferior. Most importantly the $1 admission price was too high. Leadville was the first date of two and a half weeks in Colorado. Shortly thereafter, Robbins and Holmes must have decided that their future wasn't in California after all and commenced scheduling dates to return to the familiar territory of New York State. After July 10 and 11 dates at Cheyenne and Laramie, Wyoming, the circus started backtracking through Nebraska and Kansas, spending almost a month in those two states.

Based upon the research conducted by Orin King on the circus in Kansas (see *Bandwagon*, July-August 1991, pages 40-43), it was business as usual in this state. At Marysville on July 19, the local paper recommended that the populous stay away from the show and it did. Business was poor, not only for the circus but also for the sharpies who were shut down by the Marshall. This was not the case at Blue Rapids on the 22nd where business was good in the afternoon for both the show and the thugs. Rain held down business at night. Rain in torrents continued the next day at Manhattan. Such was the downpour that the circus only set up the side show. Show executives commented that they had been in rain for two weeks. At Wamego on July 23 and Salina the next day, business was good as it was at Hays City on the 27th. At the latter village, however, the paper was outraged by the quality of the performance which it described as "Rotten."

Horrible gambling frauds followed the show throughout its Kansas tour. An ad at Solomon on August 1 featured Charles W. Fish and Satsuma's Royal Japanese Troupe. Neither act was present during the performance. When and where they left, even if they ever had been on the circus, is unclear. According to the Buffalo paper, Fish performed there, but it was the only time he was mentioned which was unusual for such an outstanding performer. The only report in the *Clipper* throughout this entire period was a brief statement that the circus wasn't going to California and had canceled all its western railroad contracts. During this period, Robbins continued to advertise for performers. In addition, the show was apparently also short handed in the side show and the advance. Once again, it was in deep trouble.



Robbins newspaper ad used in 1889. Author's collection.

Curiously, Robbins received a telegram from John Ringling dated July 27th, in which he asked: "Do you want to arrange not to conflict in Illinois with Ringling Bros. and Van Amburgh. Answer care Great Western Printing Co. St. Louis." Robbins response is not known, but it would be surprising if he was looking for a billing war with anyone at this juncture. It will be recalled that the Ringling Show was only a large wagon aggregation in 1889 and played almost the entire season tramping about Illinois.

The latter part of August found the show back in the relatively friendly confines of New York state. Tough times continued as the Albion family left on August 24th at Lynderville, New York to join the Wallace and Co. Circus. The company headed toward the eastern part of the state. At Camden, 30 miles northeast of Syracuse, on August 28th, the show received fair patronage. The paper noted that while the horses were in fine condition, the performance was generally considered thin. It was no better the next day at Adams. Although the performance was on the wane, the same wasn't true of the slicky boys. They were out in full force in Cape Vincent on August 30th. Contrast this situation to that at Lowville on September 3rd where the performance did pretty good business but the sharpies were kept in check by the local police. The populous at Canton filled the tents on September 7th. The performing elephants were particularly enjoyed. Potsdam on the 9th and Massena on the 11th produced mediocre business for the show but a big day for the sharpies. It was

the same at Cambridge 21st. While good business was had at Glenn Falls on the 24th, a more meaningful report resulted from the Unadilla visit on the 30th. The sorry state of the troupe was described as follows: "The only thing of importance last week to stir up the people of Unadilla and vicinity, was Frank Robbin's circus, which exhibited to a large and badly deluded audience last week Monday afternoon, and to a much smaller but just as badly a humbugged one in the evening. The street parade was a very fair one, with their 'herd' of two elephants, their bands, cowboys, Indians, Knights, and ladies on horse back, etc., but when you come to THE BIG SHOW, it consisted mostly of the above mentioned display, and the pictures on the walls, which delineated in a striking manner, the many wonderful things which they did not have, and the many daring acts which they did not make any attempt to perform. A few of the ring acts, were really fine, but taking the show as a whole, it was the thinnest excuse for a circus, or anything else in the way of amusement that has struck Unadilla, since the visit of the last Uncle Toms Cabin Company."



The article went on about the sharpies. Looking on the positive side, it seems that the paper was obliquely complementing the billing which still must have been extensive, however inaccurate. The season ended a few days later at Hancock on October 5th and headed to its new winterquarters where more excitement was in store.

Middletown, New York was a prosperous town of 15,000 people around 70 miles northwest of New York City. Like many towns of its size, it was a rail and farm center, and had an active industrial base. On September 30th it was reported in the local press that the Robbins Circus would be wintering in Middletown, utilizing a large barn near the rail yards. Approximately 20 men were expected to be looking after the circus property, preparing it for the oncoming season. The towners seemed genuinely eager to have a circus in their community over the winter. A prominent ad was placed in the paper advising the public that on October 9th, 81 fine draught and road horses would be auctioned off in Middletown by Mr. J. W. Holmes, "Proprietor of the Circus." Several splendid saddle horses, ponies and mules would also be in the auction.

The circus arrived on Sunday, October 6th after what had to have been a long, sad trip from Hancock, around 80 miles to the north west. A large number of towners watched the unloading and the erection of two large tents. The wagons were stored in the barn, the animals were to be loaned to various museums and the two elephants were shipped to Philadelphia (to Forepaugh?). The sixteen cars comprising the train were stored nearby until a special switch could be put down for them. The paper noted that the approximately 185 workers and performers were paid off and most got out of town on the afternoon trains. Holmes was identified as the show's manager and was directly involved in the selection of the winterquarters, the auction, and the running of the quarters. The previous manager, identified in the press as Robbins, and his assistant Loper departed the company at Hancock.

There was a large crowd of prospective buyers at the auction. Unfortunately, the bidding was not spirited and by 3:00 p. m. only 20 horses had been sold. Most of the horses sold below $100, not a particularly good price for fine specimens of horse flesh. In the October 9th daily paper it was reported the very sorry state the circus was in. The article was entitled "THE STRANDED CIRCUS—A bankrupt manager and an army of unpaid employes." It went on to state that "[f]or the employes of the 'busted' show who, upon the threshold of winter, find themselves stranded penniless in a strange community, two thousand miles separating some of them from friends and home, one cannot withhold full measure of pity. From all that can be learned, they have been most shamefully tricked, for it has developed that the stock and trappings of the concern are not the property of their late employer [Robbins?], which leaves them without remedy for the collection of the large sum of back pay due them. Yesterday, Mr. Holmes, whose claims cover all there is left of this circus wreck, offered these unfortunate people fifteen per cent of the fact of their claims in settlement in full. As their late employer is hopelessly bankrupt, and it is for them to accept of these terms or get nothing, most of them signed off, though a number of them did not come into receipt of money enough to pay for railroad tickets to their homes. Others were given tickets to New York in lieu of the percentage offered, and others refused to accept a compromise and were given due bills for the whole amount due them, which of course are worthless.

"Most of the actors and band men were with the show last year, and have claims due for services rendered in 1888, in addition to arrearages for several weeks past. These were not offered the paltry 15 per cent in settlement, for the claims of most of them amount to such a large sum, that even to pay 15 per cent upon the amount would involve an outlay of several hundred dollars. The claims of the actors range all the way from $100 to $600.

"This morning, after breakfast, which it was announced would be the last meal served to those not retained in the employ of Mr. Holmes, an indignation meeting was held on the grounds. . . . It is needless to say that Frank A. Robbins was

roundly berated by all. . . . One of the actresses said that her home was Indianapolis, that she was without money and that Robbins owes her $140. The tight rope walker, an Italian woman, has a claim of $325, and is also penniless . . . [they] expressed their pity for the lady bare back rider, who has a little child, is penniless, whose home is in Cuba, and is without friends in this country. Robbins owes her $350.

"We learned from employes of the show that two horses were seized at Deposit [New York on October 1] for a debt. The show started out in the spring for California, but turned back after going west as far as Colorado, where the business became so poor that the show was in danger of stranding. On the way home, business was fair until within the past few weeks. At Hancock, where the last exhibition was given, the proprietor [Robbins?] told one of the employes, so he says, that he had been anxious for some time to get into New York State and was glad that he was safely over the line, for matters were so arranged that the men could not touch his property now."

The unpaid men hired a local attorney and as a result of a series of meetings between the attorney and Holmes, these men were paid the 15 per cent of the monies due them. Most of them departed for undisclosed locations. A few days later it was reported that some still remained in Middletown. Two of them, around 13 years old, were seen on the tent grounds trying to keep warm over a fire which they made of water soaked wood, shivering as they went about their planning on how they would return home. Humans were not the only creatures in jeopardy by the recent events. A roan horse owned by Holmes was found tied in the woods, with a large gash in its leg. It hadn't eaten for several days. A white donkey was also found wandering about and was being cared for by a local resident. As a final note, it was reported that the tents were struck and stored at the winterquarters. Around 30 of the horses were not sold and were taken to a local farm for the winter. It was generally understood that the show would go out in the spring. Will wonders never cease.

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Side Lights On The Circus Business

PART SIXTEEN

By David W. Watt

Editor's note. The dates listed are the days the article appeared in the Janesville, Wisconsin Gazette.

July 18, 1914

A few days ago a friend of mine called me into his office and said, "Dave, I have finished reading one of the most interesting stories about elephants. It was written back in the early seventies by a bareback rider by the name of Frank Melville, and I thought possibly you might know him." And strange enough, the entire Melville family, who originally came from England, had been close friends of mine for more than thirty-five years. Nine years ago, which was the last time the Barnum show exhibited here under the management of James A. Bailey, this same Frank Melville was the rider and equestrienne director of the show and was my guest for the day.

Back in '87 when we were showing at Madison Square Garden in New York city, Frank Melville's father and mother came to the show and invited my wife and I to their home which was in the suburbs of New York City, to spend Sunday as their guests. This Sunday visit was one that will never be forgotten.

They had originally lived in the city, and the old gentleman and his wife had both been high class circus riders in the business in their younger days. They had retired and gone to the suburbs and purchased a fine home with a few acres of land, where they were away from the noise and bustle of the city. As for the show that Frank Melville was traveling with at the time, the story was written, all the heads of the show, the proprietor, the manager and the ticket agent and treasurer, were all Janesville men. P. A. Older was the proprietor and married his wife, a Miss Stevens, in Janesville, and his father-in-law, Frank G. Stevens, was the manager, and Dell Comstock, also a Janesville boy, was the ticket agent.

It was along about '70 [1873] that the show started south and at Shreveport, La., the yellow fever broke out in the show and it was quarantined. While Mr. Older and Frank G. Stevens escaped, young Comstock was quarantined and died a few days later of the dreaded disease.

The following story written by Frank Melville on the characteristics and habits of the elephants is certainly an interesting one, for it treats with the hardships of the wagon show days of fifty years ago. This letter was written for a magazine known in those days as *Wallace's Monthly,* and for the most part was devoted to the high class harness horses.

"My family have been in the circus business for seventy years and my earliest memories are of incidents of show life. Speaking of elephants. I once rode forty miles on the back of one, old Tippoo Saib, when I was only six years old, and ever since have been around where they were, and had opportunities for studying their ways. I don't want any more intimate association with them than that, but so far have a real fascination for me. During the tenting season when I am not at work in the ring, the most likely place to find me is in the vicinity of the elephants. I never get tired of watching them for they are always doing something new, showing how intelligent, cunning, and I may say, how devilish they are. They understand what is said to them as well as most people do and think about what they want to do just as a person would.



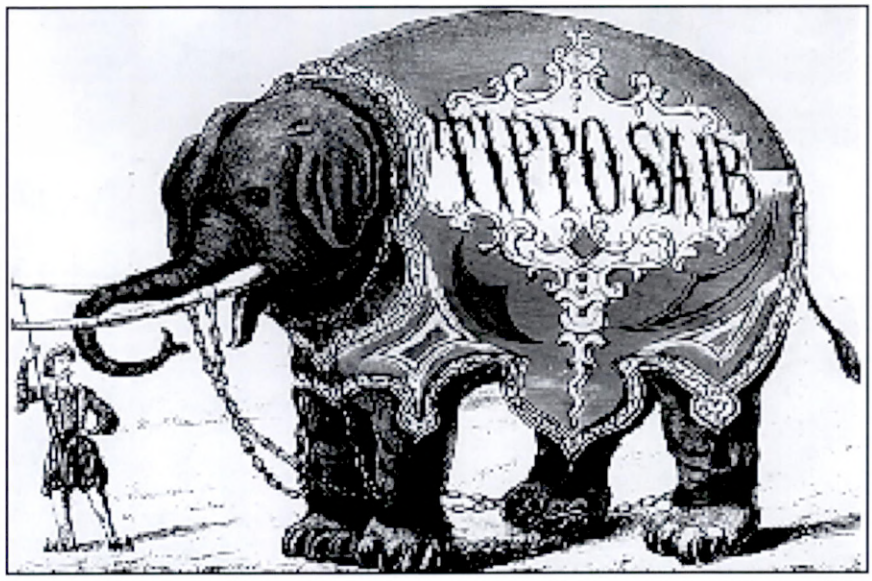
Frank Melville, rider and equestrian director. Pfening Archives.

"I have seen elephants again and again when they thought nobody was about to watch them, perpetrate thefts with an ingenuity in avoiding detection that a human thief would hardly beat. It is no uncommon thing for an elephant to pull up the stake to which he is chained, go to a feed bin containing oats or carrots, wrench off the lock, raise the lid, eat all he wants, put down the lid again, return to his place, poke the stake to which his chain is fastened back into the same hole it came out of, stamp it down with his foot and then when his keeper comes, he will look as innocent as a lamb; but if you'll watch the beast until the man begins cursing about the robbery of the feed bin, you'll observe an amused twinkle in his wicked, watchful little eyes that shows his enjoyment of the situation.

"The elephant is always on the lookout to play a trick. Incautiously leave a jacket or a shirt where he can get at it, and he will, when he thinks himself unobserved, deliberately pull every button off it and then put it back just where you left it, and show that he finds it funny when you get mad. I have seen

two of them get up a sham fight to attract the attention of a third, so that the fourth could get a chance to steal the feed of the third.

"Speaking of the elephant's understanding of words and, mind you, he knows their meaning as words. without any accompanying gestures, such as you have to make to the best trained horse. I remember an incident with that same Tippoo Saib that I rode on when I was a boy. We were going into Prairie du Chien [Wisconsin] and he was let into the river. Elephants are very fond of the water and he was enjoying himself immensely with a crowd of, I suppose, a thousand people looking on to see the comfort he was taking, when a fellow came along with a monstrous big New Foundland dog that he had a most conceited notion of. The dog had, as the man said, whipped a bear, and the fellow thought he could whip anything, even the elephant, and 'sicced' him on Tippoo Saib. Frank Nash, who was the elephant's keeper, suggested to the man that the contract was too big, and the dog seemed to have some notion himself, for he just swam around Tippoo and barked at him. But that seemed to annoy the elephant after a while, and Frank just said quietly: 'Take him, Tippoo.' The next second Tippoo took him around the waist, soused him under water and shook him there as a man would a rag, then tossed him up full thirty feet in the air, caught him on the points of his tusks, grabbed him again and flung him out on the shore. 'Dead?' Dead! Why that dog looked like a handkerchief.



Tippo Saib as pictured in an 1868 Van Amburgh & Co. poster. Circus World Museum collection.

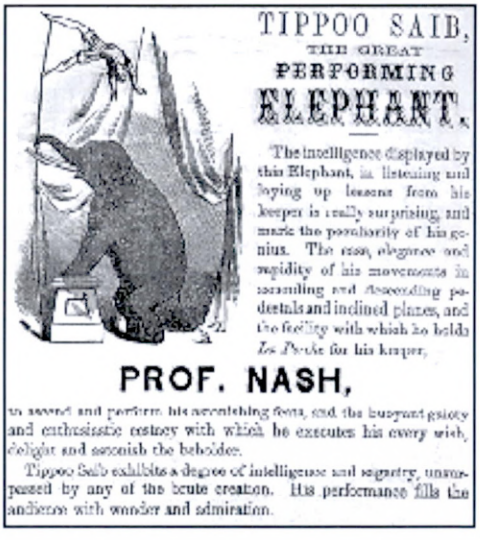
"Tippoo Saib was the grandest elephant I ever saw. He had tusks ten feet long, and when he was mad, he was able to close their points together or spread them apart as he liked, in a way I've never seen any other elephant do. When he got a chance to kill anything, he would first knock it down, then put the points of those tremendous tusks together, and dropping on his knees, would drive those points through whatever he was murdering, or mash it into the ground with them. At one little town in Iowa where we were stopping over a Sunday, we had a sort of canvas enclosure around him where he was chained to a stake. The keeper went to his dinner, leaving a watchman in charge of him. A young doctor came around and wanted to get into the enclosure to look at Tippoo Saib. He had been to the show the day before and seen him there, but he wanted to get a quiet look at him. The watchman told him the beast was dangerous and he had better not go near him there, but the doctor allowed that he knew all about it, that elephants were docile, intelligent animals, and he was not afraid of them. As he was so confident and seemed to know so much about elephants, the watchman went to his dinner. When he came back, Tippoo Saib had literally torn the young doctor's head off his body.

"After that they cut his tusks off short, and it seemed to break his heart. They were fitted with iron sockets to screw on again, but he had no confidence in them as weapons to kill anything with, appeared to know they were no longer a part of him, but just an attachment, and he was not the same proud elephant again.

"His keeper used to keep his money in the hollow of the socket of one of the tusks, a safer place than a bank as long as Tippoo lived, for even if he had lost most of his nerve when his tusks were cut off, he still was an elephant to be likely to kill a stranger whenever he got a good chance; and even if he wouldn't, thieves wouldn't be likely to trust his good nature.

"But even with the tusks off, he was regarded as dangerous. He would roll his trunk up into a close roll, like coiling up a spring, and then flip it out, and whatever he struck that way was gone. I believe he could have knocked down a hippopotamus with one crack of that trunk. Sometimes pigs would come about while he was eating. He wouldn't appear to pay any attention to them until one of them would get close enough; then a tap would be given by the monster trunk, and the life be fairly knocked out of piggy. He would reach for the pig, make a sure job of it by standing on him for a moment, then toss the shapeless carcass

Tippoo Saib as pictured in a Van Amburgh courier. Pfening Archives.


TIPPOO SAIB,
THE GREAT
PERFORMING
ELEPHANT.

The intelligence displayed by this Elephant, in listening and laying up lessons from his keeper is really surprising, and marks the peculiarity of his genius. The ease, elegance and rapidity of his movements in ascending and descending pedestals and inclined planes, and the feeling with which he holds *Les Paroles* for his keeper,

PROF. NASH,

to accord and perform his astonishing feats, and the buoyant gaiety and enthusiastic ecstacy with which he executes his every wish, delight and astonish the beholder.

Tippoo Saib exhibits a degree of intelligence and sagacity, unsurpassed by any of the brute creation. His performance fills the audience with wonder and admiration.

behind him and go on eating as placidly as ever.

"In Somerset, Ohio, I think it was, he got stubborn and struck everybody that came near him, and in fear of what he might do if he got fairly started, they killed him--shot him in the eye with a very large rifle ball and settled him. I was not with the company then, and did not see him killed, but I saw Canada, another elephant, killed and a desperate job it was.

"Canada was a big ugly devil of an elephant, belonging to Mabie's Combination when I was with them. He had trouble first with him in Chicago where we were showing in an iron building near the Court House. He had one of his tantrums, but before he got thoroughly started and went to breaking things, they tripped him with ropes, threw him down and beat him until he 'hollered,' which is the token of submission. But the fit came on him suddenly a few days afterward, and he opened the proceeding by knocking down one end of his barn and walking out into the street. He wandered about, doing as much harm as a tornado--tossing hacks into the air, flinging stoops across the street, tearing down signs and lamp posts and playing the deuce generally. But he didn't kill anybody. Not that the citizens of Chicago gave him much chance, for all he could get to see of them was coat tails disappearing up stairways or vanishing in the distance. They even turned the bridges to keep him from getting over to the north or west sides of the town. Finally the keeper got him under control.

"They then sent him up to Mr. Mabie's farm at Delavan, Wisconsin, with the rest of the menagerie to winter, and that was where he played the last act of his fife. Father and I were training our horses there at the time, and Canada's keeper was endeavoring to break him for some ring performance. One day the brute got one of his spells upon him, rushed from the ring out into the stable yard and began an indiscriminate slaughter of the animals in that enclosure. In a few minutes he had killed two buffaloes, a sacred cow, a sacred ox, a



Another Van Amburgh & Co. poster of Tippoo Saib. Circus World Museum collection.

couple of elks, three or four horses and ponies and a white camel. He would seize an animal, toss it up in the air, catch it on his tusks as it came down and then either ram or trample the life out of it. When he had killed everything in sight, he sallied out for down town. The alarm had gone ahead of him, and the popular excitement was past description. A trap was set with a long chain and an enormous block of stone to entangle his legs and hold him. The chain was as thick as a log chain, and the stone, which had been intended for a corner stone or something of the sort and had a large iron ring in it, was as big as a bureau. When the trap was

Stuart Craven, elephant trainer. Pfening Archives.



set, a man ran out in sight of Canada, and the elephant who would rather kill a man than anything else, took after him. The trap was successful so far as making the chain and stone fast to him, but he kept right on and would have caught the man, who was a fast runner, if both had been kept to the level road. But the man jumped down into an unfinished cellar of a new house and ran up a narrow flight of steps on the opposite side. The elephant jumped down after him, springing off and alighting as easily as a dog would, with the big stone clattering behind him. Fortunately the stone was too large to pass up the flight of steps and there stuck wedged against the stone walls on each side. Canada was fast at last, but it was a mighty close call for the man.

"While the savage brute was still straining at the chain to get up the steps, they managed to get more chains and ropes on him so that they threw him down. They went to work to conquer him. They wore out big clubs on him, fired loads of buck shots into his trunk and flank and ears, jabbed pitchforks into his trunk until he was so wounded that he couldn't bend it, beat and tortured him for many hours, until he was literally exhausted and covered with blood and then he shouted. Stewart Craven, who had him in charge, asked him, 'Have you got enough?' and Canada gave a howl in reply just as a man might have done as much as to say that he had.

"'Will you behave yourself if we let you up?' Craven asked him, and he 'hollered' again just as fair a promise as ever an elephant made.

"When an elephant cries out under punishment and answers that way, it is always understood that the trouble for that time at least is at an end. But Canada was a treacherous devil, and no sooner felt himself loose, than he threw up his head, gave a yell of rage, dashed out of the cellar, and started to kill. Everybody fairly flew out of his way. The men on horseback

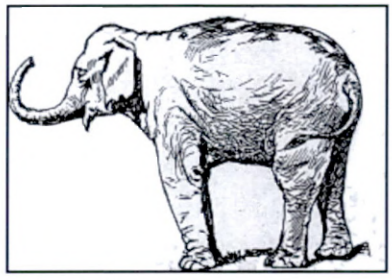
galloped back to the farm and he after them. But he was tired, and when they got under cover, he took up a position in the stack yard where there were three great hay stacks. Around them he tramped, hunting all who ventured near him, but not going outside the fence. They got shot guns and fired buck shots into his head with no other effect than to check his wild rushes at them. When they found that shot guns were no use, they tried rifles, but still they avoided aiming at any vital part for he was a valuable beast and they hoped to be able to subdue without killing him. But men almost lost the use of their arms from holding guns that kicked like mules every time they heaved a handful of lead against him, and still there were no signs of his weakening in his fury. The fight went on steadily for three days and nights during which time he had not a bite to eat--for he was too mad to take any of the hay around him and not a drop of water. At length a marksman with a rifle that carried a bullet as big as your thumb managed to put out the sight of one of his eyes. They hoped then to be able to get on his blind side, slip ropes on him, trip him down and set to work on him with clubs, for even yet they thought to save him. But he would allow nobody to approach his blind side. He would hear the lightest step and wheel with his good eye toward it quicker than a horse could turn. Finally the hope of saving him was abandoned, and the order given, 'kill him.' The marksman put one of those big bullets into his head, somewhere about the ear (one of the elephant's vital points) and Canada dropped to his fore knees. There he knelt for three quarters of an hour before anybody would venture close enough behind him to hamstring him with an ax. When that was done he tumbled over, and then by shooting into his head at short range they killed him. That was in 1863."

July 25, 1914

In my time in the business there was a saying that good elephants never die, and that if it weren't for the bad ones that had to be executed, there would be far less brought into this country. Their peculiar habits and their shrewdness makes them an interesting animal to write about, for they are always doing something.

"Cow elephants never are vicious. They are sometimes mischievous, but never malicious and murderous. The bulls are apt to get that way about four times a year, especially as they grow old. At such times they get those sudden fits of uncontrollable rage, such as Canada had, and woe be to whatever living thing is in their way then.

"Sometimes, however, a good tempered elephant is spoiled by a cruel keeper. There was John Nathans--so called after his first owner for instance. While 'Elephant Bill' had him in charge he was as good as an elephant could be, but after Cooley had him a while in the John O'Brien show, he got so bad that they had to kill him. He killed a female elephant and a man named Bill Pearl, I think. Then at Frankford or Germantown,



Pa. they killed him.

"An elephant is worse than any other wild beast when he is wicked because he has so much intelligence in planning deviltry and cunning ferocity in exercising it with his terrible power. If an elephant could talk, he'd be a match in cuteness for most men. And they do talk among themselves. In 1862, when I was traveling with Mabie's show, we were going to Independence, Iowa, the town where Mr. Older, our manager, lived, and as it was his own town, we wanted to put on some style there. So we had three elephants hitched to the band wagon. They were tandem of course. Betsy, a small cow elephant went first; Mary, a little larger cow elephant was second, and Sultan, a very big bull elephant was between the shafts. We had to cross a bridge going into the town--a wooden bridge, forty feet high over the rocky bed of a stream that all the water had gone out of. When you come to a bridge with elephants, it isn't go as you please, but go as they please.

"These three moved so slowly that we were full fifteen minutes going fifty feet. I was sitting on the front of the band wagon and could just feel it move and that was all. Betsy would go down a foot, try to shake the bridge with it, put her weight upon it gradually and then send back a series of the queerest little grunts and you ever heard to Sultan and he would answer her in the same way. Sometimes Mary would join in their conversation. Just as we got to the center of the bridge, there was a crash and Sultan dropped right through from between the shafts and clean out of sight like a bullet would sink in water and the other two darted across to solid ground, each giving a frightened yell as it made the plunge. The bandwagon musicians, the driver and myself stopped at the edge of the hole through which Sultan went down. I sprang off and shouted to the musicians to jump out. They did so, except the trombone player, a fat Deutscher, who had dropped his instrument in the confusion and who rose up and said, 'No, I don't got out mid out dat instrument.' Well, we ran down to Sultan. He had fallen in a sitting posture, and there he still sat, groaning dreadfully. It took twenty men and ten horses with blocks and tackle to hoist him to his feet. With great trouble we got him out of the ravine and up to Mr. Older's farm where they nursed him for a week. They dosed him and used liniment on him by the keg full, but still nothing seemed to relieve him. He just lay on his side, groaning dreadfully and touching the end of his trunk to one eye as if trying to call attention to something there. That motion was noticed at last, and the doctor went to work to examine that eye. The instant he touched it Sultan gave a sigh of satisfaction and stretched himself out as much as to say, 'That's the place, look out for that.' 'Me doctor pulled out a splinter, three-quarters as long as your little finger that had been broken from the bridge and gone in right beside Sultan's eyeball, and as soon as that was out, the animal got up and commenced to get better. Poor Sultan, he was a fine fellow with tusks six feet long and great brass balls on the ends of them in which Long John, his keeper, used to keep his money. As he

got his strength back he got dangerous, and about ten years after his fall, they had to kill him.

"I saw little Betsy as drunk as a fiddler one time, and she was a funny sight. We were showing late in the fall in Indiana in very severe weather. Some monkeys and birds and snakes had already frozen, and Betsy showed that she was suffering greatly from cold. Long John went to Manager Older and said to him, 'You'd better get some whiskey for Betsy, or she'll freeze.'

"'How much?'

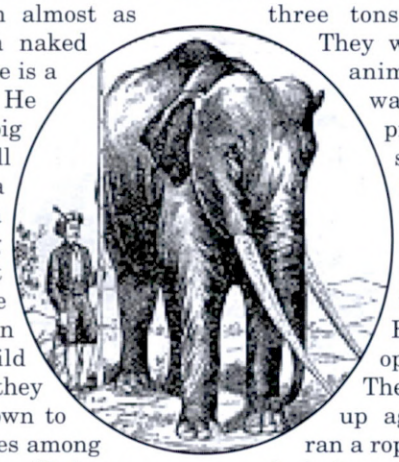
"'Her ears are just beginning to freeze; get three buckets.'

"Well, they knew that was two for Betsy and one for Long John, but when it came to elephants, he was boss, and the whiskey was got as he ordered. Only you should have seen the tavern keeper's eyes stand out when they ordered three buckets of whiskey for two drinks. Betsy drank all they gave her and got raving drunk. She'd stagger and roll over and pick herself up and picked Long John up and toss him on her back and sort of laughed, and he'd laugh, and it was nip and tuck between them which was the drunker. Elephants are very fond of whiskey or any sort of liquor, and they are not only fond of getting drunk themselves, but they are very considerate of drunken men. I never yet knew of an elephant hurting a drunken man.

"That Long John, when he was staggering drunk, would go right up to Sultan or Canada when nobody else dared to go near them and would fool around them and swing on their tusks and toss their trunks about, and they would not only not do him any harm, but would not let anybody else go near him until he chose to wake up. And any real drunken man can do pretty much what he pleases with an elephant.

"Talking about dangerous elephants, Cooper & Bailey had one that was a terror some days when he was allowed to live (sic). His name was Chieftain. He would knock things down now whenever he could and dared, but for a long while was not a sufficiently developed devil to tusk and kill them afterward. He was old enough. I saw a desperate fight with him once in Jackson, Mich. He had been broken to lie down in the ring, but suddenly one morning, while his keeper was rehearsing him, he made up his mind that he wouldn't lie down. He had to be broken in at once. There was no other way. So they took him out to the fair ground, tripped him, and when they got him down on his belly with his legs spread out so that he couldn't rise, they went to work beating him with hoop poles and clubs and shovels and anything they could wield.

They wore out a hundred hoop poles on him and were hammering him steady from half past nine in the morning until four in the afternoon. Then he 'hollered,' and after that they had no more trouble in making him lie down. Some people may think that the elephant's hide is so thick that a beating don't hurt him much, but that is a mistake. It is an awful punishment for him. The elephant's skin is very sensitive. Flies and mosquitoes will annoy him almost as much as they would a naked man. And, big as he is, he is a very nervous animal. He isn't afraid to fight any big beast, but a mouse will throw him almost into a fit with terror. Let a mouse get to running about the elephant house at night, and if the keeper does not run in, in response to their wild trumpetings of alarm, they will knock the house down to get out. And when he goes among them at such a time, they will cluster around him as close as they can stand to him with their trunks waving high in the air. I imagine there must be some little beast like a mouse in their own country which gets into their trunks when they are lying down asleep."



August 1, 1914

In this, the third letter written by my old friend Frank Melville about the habits and the characteristics of the large animals with the circus, is perhaps the best description ever written by anyone on this subject. Mr. Melville was in the business many years prior to my time; in fact, he spent his entire life in the work. As he was always a high-class rider, when he was not on the road in the summer, he was practicing in the ring barn or in some European country on the road. So his knowledge of these animals is of great value, for while Frank Melville has been a feature of many great shows as a bareback rider, he also has been equestrian director for many years and held other high-class positions in connection with the management.

"I said elephants would fight any other big beast, and so they will, but there are some that they don't want any trouble with and that I don't think they can get the best of. And one of those is the black rhinoceros. I saw one of those devils set out to make mischief in O'Brien's practicing buildings in Frankfort, Pa. once.

He was a double-horned fellow, but they had sawed his horns off short which he hadn't sense enough to remember. They billed him for seven tons of weight, and so I suppose that he must have weighed probably three tons, maybe more. They were getting the animals into the wagon cages preparatory to starting out in the spring, and when they came to that black rhinoceros, the trouble began. He was in a pen opposite the door. They backed a cage up against the door, ran a rope through it and made it fast to the ring in his nose. On the other end of the rope twenty men hung on to hold him if he tried to make a break. And the rope was like a hawser you'd tie up a steamboat with. They put potatoes on a line across from the door of his pen to the cage door and to that point coaxed him along all right.

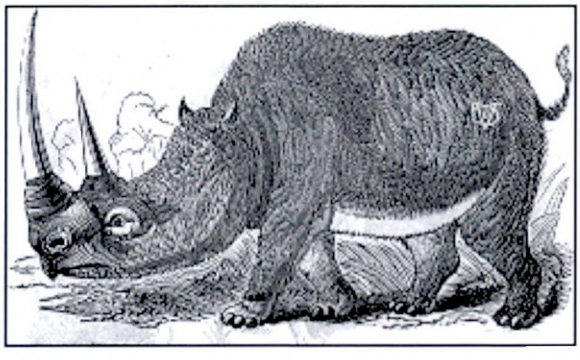
Then he gave a grunt, tossed his head just once and broke that rope. There was a yell outside, 'He's loose!,' and those twenty men went over the fences like birds, and some of them I don't believe stopped before they got to Philadelphia. I was practicing my horses in the round house just outside a wooden partition from where he was, and when I heard that shout, ran upstairs to the loft and looked out from a door above where I had full view of the whole proceed-

ings. When the rhinoceros found himself loose, he went for his natural enemies, the elephants, that were tied upon one side. Empress, the oldest cow elephant in the country, was among them. She was an Asiatic elephant with short feeble tusks. First the black brute went for the four small elephants over in one corner and tossed them about, drove his nose under them, heaved them up in the air and trampled on them, damaging them so that two of them died. Then, when he got them all piled up in a heap, he rushed in another direction.

"He caught the tiger against the wall and killed him. Then he upset several cages, but, fortunately, none of the other animals got out, and as he saw nothing about them to kill, he passed on.

"Next he charged on old Empress. He would plunge in under her belly and then pull himself out backward, showing that he was doing his best to cut her open with his terrible horns which he forgot had been sawed off. She was so that she couldn't escape and was screaming for help. After a little she got him down and was trying to force her short tusks into him when Cooley, the keeper, came in with a short hatchet in his hand. When she saw him, she let the rhinoceros get up, no doubt supposing the keeper would soon take care of him. But as quick as a flash that devil, as soon as he was on his feet, made a rush for Cooley so suddenly that the man had no time to jump aside, so was caught up in his nose, and with him there the beast made a dive for the wall to fix him as he had the tiger. But by sheer good luck the rhinoceros's nose was pointed straight for a little door, so instead of Cooley being mashed flat against the wall, he was shot through into the stable as if he had been fired out of a gun. Luckily the door was too narrow for the rhinoceros to get through, but he kept trying it until Cooley picked himself up, ran back at him with the ax and gave him two cuts over the eyes that blinded his sight with blood. Then the keeper darted in behind him by another door and ran to the rhinoceros' pen. Blind as he was, the brute followed him by either sound or scent so closely as to almost catch him and plunged into the pen where he was again secured. Big as he was, that black rhinoceros was as nimble as a cat. It would make you stand up to see the power and the quickness and the devilishness of the beast.

Did I ever see a hippopotamus fight? Well, no, but I have seen one in a fit of rage do things that discouraged intimate acquaintance most mightily. It was one that Bailey, Nathans & Quick—the old "flatfoot" combination had in '67. They had an Arab keeper for him that he was very fond of, and the Arab was struck with paralysis. While the man lay sick, they thought they would see if they couldn't get the beast into the ring as the Arab used to and tried a rehearsal of it in the morning. But the moment the hippopotamus was brought out of his cage and missed his keeper, he got wild. He struck a man with the side of his head, just a sort of careless tap, and knocked him clear out of the ring with both legs broken. Then he struck in the same way, the hub of a low chariot wheel very strongly built and knocked every spoke out of it. He took after a man who was a famous short distance runner and was so swift he would have caught and trampled him to death if the ring had been a few feet wider. As it was, the man just saved himself by darting up the seats. The hippopotamus was in such a fury they were afraid he would die of passion, but he charged back into his cage, and there they kept him for fifteen days, feeding him through a hole in the roof until he got quiet. At the end of that time the he charged back into his cage, and there they kept him for fifteen days, feeding him through a hole in the roof until he got quiet. At the end of that time the Arab had himself carried in a stretcher and the hippopotamus was let out. As soon as he heard his keeper's voice and saw him, he was quiet and docile as a lamb. They made lots of money on that hippopotamus. He cost them $25,000 originally and they made $80,000 out of him the in the first season. He lived eight years in this country and then one night in Kingston, turned over on his back and died, nobody knew why.



A rhino as pictured in a Van Amburgh ammimal booklet. Pfening Archives.

Returning to the subject of elephants, I saw one lassoed one time at Truckee, California by a Mexican vaquero. The beast broke loose and ran away, not meaning any harm, but wanting to go as he pleased awhile. More than forty men on horseback chased him fully two hours and a half and couldn't head him off or drive him back. At last they got a vaquero to help, and he struck the elephant on rising ground where the brute couldn't make time. The lariat noose went whirling through the air and drew on the elephant's head, and he just stopped and stood trembling until the man that had charge of him rode up and put the hook in his ear. And he went back like a lamb. The incident made a difference of $500 in our receipts that afternoon."

August 8, 1914

There is one department of the show business that has grown fast in the last thirty years and that is the wardrobe. In the early days of the Burr Robbins show as soon as they had closed the season in the fall and been put away in winter quarters, the first department for the coming season to receive attention was that of new wardrobe for the parade and grand entry. Mrs. Burr Robbins was always at the head of this and was assisted by two expert seamstresses. One large room in the house was set aside for this work, and it was there that the banner for the cages, covers for the elephants and camels, and suiting for the drivers were all made for the coming season. Even in that early day there was what they called rainy day costumes, which were always those carried over from the last season, and in case of a muddy,

bad lot, all the new wardrobe was never seen.

For many years back in the big shows the wardrobe has been one of the features of the parade and the grand entry and thousands of dollars have been spent in this way. In the great Ringling shows the wardrobe for the big spectacular pieces which the shows are running this year have taken weeks of hard work by experts and hundreds of them to complete the wardrobe for these great displays. They, too, always carry what is known as the rainy day costumes.



The Ringling Bros. winter quarters wardrobe department. Pfening Archives.

It was for many years in their earlier career that this show made their wardrobe in their winter quarters under the supervision of the wardrobe women who traveled with the show during the season. But now there are many times many women traveling with the show to look after this wardrobe, do the mending, and look after the cleaning and upkeep of this department while on the road.

The different kinds of wardrobe are always carried in trunks made expressly for this purpose, and it takes an entire car to carry these over the road. This car is one of the first to be unloaded after the dressing room tent is raised. It takes some time to open all these trunks and get out the different articles that are to be used for that day's parade and grand entry, and it is only possible to do it in short time by having experts that know just where everything is and just where to commence. After a season or two in the business, much of this wardrobe is sold to the smaller shows at a very cheap price.

P. J. Tracy, an artist, writing from Saskatoon, says "Not the least wonderful thing to be seen with the Sells-Floto Shows is a set of trappings, elephant trappings used on Lucia Zora's bulls. These are the handsomest as well as the most unique I have ever seen. Even in India where time is cheap and patience unexcelled, I never saw more intricate and painstaking work.

This harness, I learn, was made by Fred C. Alispaw, the superintendent of the menagerie. An attendant told me that there were over 60,000 brass ornaments used in embellishing it.

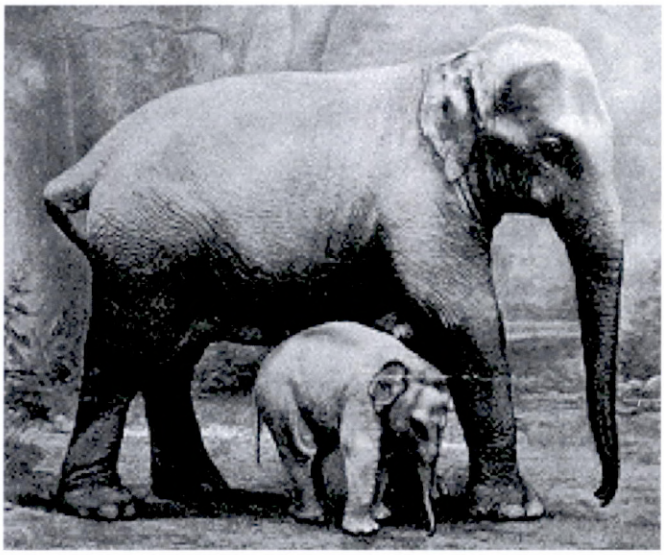
The following and last letter written by Frank Melville many years ago on the big beasts in the show business should prove interesting, for it gives the real facts as they happened from day to day in his time in the business, and Frank was always identified with the best shows in the business.

"But I don't want any contracts for stopping elephants. Last spring when we were getting ready to start out for Cooper & Bailey's building in Philadelphia (their winter quarters), the keeper was trying to teach a cow elephant to go up on a pedestal in the ring. She didn't want to learn and suddenly made a bolt to get away straight at the door where I was standing. I got up into the loft in about two jumps, and when I came down the keeper said to me, mad as sin, 'Why didn't you stop her?' Well it makes me laugh yet to think of what cheek that man had. He no doubt thought it was easy enough because he could have done it if he had been there before her, but as for me, I wasn't there to stop elephants.

"The funniest thing I know of, though, about elephants was old man [Lewis] Lent's adventure with a dwarf Asiatic specimen that he had here in his New York show. It was a comical looking little beast--little for an elephant, that is--with no tusks and ears like wings and Lent used to try to make a pet of it. He would go into the room where he persisted in keeping it in a heat like that of a bake oven and would fool about it until the keeper told him to take care or it would hurt him. But he pooh-poohed that. 'I'll take my cane and scalp him if he doesn't behave himself,' the old man would say. One night when Stickney and myself were dressing, we heard from that room near us a great noise of somebody coughing and sputtering and shouting, 'Ah! Would you? Quit that! Oh!' and calling for help. We ran out and the sight we saw just paralyzed us both with laughter. There was Lent, backed up against the wall in a comer, and the dwarf elephant trying to butt the life out of him, but the beast's chain was so short that he couldn't get a fair chance at him and could only sink in his stomach a couple of feet or so at every drive. The keeper soon put a stop to the elephant's fun, but I don't know how long it was before Lent's belly rounded out again to its former fair proportions.

The most interesting fact ever reported about elephants in this country is the now seemingly well authenticated story that the cow elephant Baby now in Cooper & Bailey's winter building in Philadelphia is going to have a young one. If that is true, it will be the first elephant calf ever born in captivity, I believe. Baby is the queen of the troupe of five elephants to which she belongs. She manages and bosses them all, and they seem perfectly devoted to her. I

saw them crowd together to catch her when she was falling from a breaking pedestal one time and lower her gently to the ground. Let her call them and they will rush to her no matter what stands in the way, and they will not allow her to be stuck or hurt. They all seem now to know her condition and consequently take extraordinary care of her, but she has always been queen among them. She is naturally wiser than any other elephant and the kindest beast of her sort. She will not break loose herself or do any mischief, but she will turn the others loose. It is pleasant to witness their affection for her and how thoughtful they are to guard her against all risk. They will not let her get into a dangerous place--crossing a bridge that might break, or a ford in which she might mire, until one of the old males has gone over ahead and trumpeted back that all is safe for her.



Baby [aka Hebe] and offspring Columbia in the Cooper & Bailey winter quarters. Pfening Archives.

August 15, 1914

While passing the stall of the fast horses at the fair grounds the first of the week, a man well past the middle age of life called to me and shook hands, saying: "Dave, don't you remember me?" And while his face looked familiar, the name had gone and I could not place him.

"Well," he said, "when I was a kid and lived in Janesville they called me Andy Connors, and you are the man that put me in the show business. I applied to you down at the Spring Brook winter quarters of the Burr Robbins show for a job taking care of ponies, and you said to me, 'Young man, you are too young to travel in the show and even though you have your parents' consent, there is but little that you could do around a circus.' But finally, after talking matters over, I was put to work. When the show started on the road I was given a pony cage to drive over the road. That season we went through the far west and it was many an all-night drive over the prairies of Kansas and Nebraska that I thought it would be impossible for me to keep awake. But I well recollect that you never passed me in the night that you did not call out to me and say, 'How are you getting along, kid? Are you all right.' Now this possibly did not mean much to you, but to me it meant a great deal. I really thought that you had taken an interest in me and were looking after me in a personal way. I never have forgotten the interest that you took in me the first season that I was in the business. But, Mr. Watt, I have been around many a circus since that time. I have traveled from California to Maine and only left the Ringling show last week to come back to my old home and spend a week at the fair and take a look at the fast trotters and pacers which I have always been interested in."

Andy Connors years ago was a high class driver, one of the long team kind as they are known in the business and he could mount one of the high wagons and pick up the lines over eight or ten horses with as much assurance and ease as the average man would drive a single pair. These are the kind of drivers that are always in demand with the big shows and Andy expects to return next week and join the Ringling show again for the balance of the season.

A character in show business far different from the average man was in Janesville this week entertaining the thousands who attend the fair. This man is W. C. Du Brock, who at present and for many years has made his home in Chicago. Mr. Du Brock was raised in Tennessee and his father was a dry goods merchant there for many years. While his two older brothers took kindly to the mercantile business, he, the younger of the brothers, could not settle down to that kind of a life. The horses and the hounds seemed to be his hobby from his boyhood days.

This young man's first venture in the show business was to start out a minstrel show which did not prove to be a financial success. After losing a few thousand dollars in this business, he closed the show and later opened up a dry goods store in Chicago, but this did not prove to be to his liking. It was only a short time till he sold out and went to Wyoming where for a time he settled on a ranch.

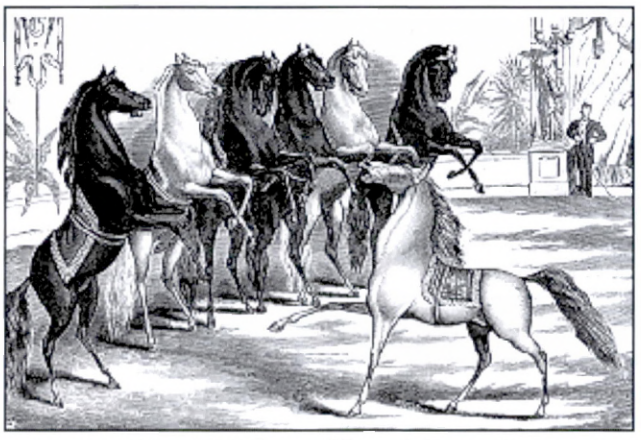
About eight years ago Mr. Du Brock started out a wild west show from Wyoming and went directly east and opened at Long Island where he made considerable money. The following season he came back to Chicago and opened at Riverview Park, where he gave them an up-to-date wild west show and called it the "Overland Train Robbery." The following winter he went east again to New Jersey. From New Jersey he came back west and organized a large wild west show and gave as one of the features, "General Custer's Last Battle." This did not prove much of a success and about this time Mr. Du Brock opened a riding school at Edgewater, a north suburb of Chicago. This riding school has always proved a money maker. This season so far has been one of the best that he has ever had. At present he has seventy-two horses in his stables at this place. He had a manager and many caretakers at his riding academy which will run until later in the fall.

All Mr. Du Brock's horses and hounds are trained at his quarters in Chicago, and all his dates are filled up until late in the fall. Mr. Du Brock's wife and two children travel

with him. From Janesville they go back to Chicago for one week and from there go directly to St. Joe, Mo., to the state fair. From St. Joe to Des Moines, Ia., from Des Moines to Minneapolis, then to Milwaukee, Springfield and from there to Little Rock, Ark.

In all probability Mr. Du Brock's riding academy at his home in Chicago and his wild west and high class horses on the road will be two enterprises which he will carry on permanently for some time. His running horses are high class, and the five eighths of a mile ran Wednesday over the half mile track was the fastest ever made in this part of the country even in the palmiest days of the fast runners.

After the death of Colonel H. Harris, husband of Madam Marantette, who had been her life partner for more than thirty years, the Madame seemed to think there was but little more for her to work for. She went direct to her home in Mendon, Michigan, and a few days ago Mr. Du Brock bought the entire



outfit of Madame Marantette and added her high class horses and other features to his already great show. Mr. Du Brock has twelve of his famous horses here which three years ago took part in a grand opera opening in Chicago in the "Girl of the Golden West." In this production Mr. Du Brock furnished sixteen broncos and sixteen high class riders for the entire season and for his services alone received a salary of $500 per week.

In this grand opera production in the first scene there were four horses grazing at the foot of a mountain, and a famous spotted pony which was here on the fair grounds would come down the side of the mountain and at first sight of the other horses would whinny to them. This was accomplished by holding a hidden looking glass in front of the pony so that he could see his own picture, and then he would never forget, but it takes long hard work and a world of patience to make these things possible.

On Thursday morning I had been detained just a minute to shake hands with Harry Earl, press representative for the Ringlings, and he is here for the first time to announce their coming on September 3rd. This will give you time to get ready for the great holiday.

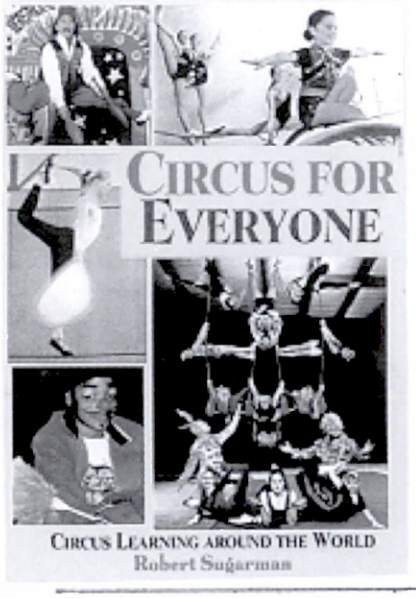
Friday evening closed the greatest all feature fair ever held in Janesville. Records were broken in many of the races, and everything in the line of attraction was of the highest order. The Du Brock shows, with their high school horses, their polo teams and fast runners were all of the highest order, and some of them were constantly before the people until the last bell was tapped. Mr. Du Brock is a hard, conscientious worker and is always ready to do a little more than his contract calls for. Should the Du Brocks come this way again, they will surely receive a warm welcome from Janesville and Rock county people.

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